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Virginia Ironside tells you how to cope

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How fame can bring misfortune

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THE INDEPENDENT

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Thursday 26 March 1998 45p (IR 50p) No 3,568



Victims: Natalie Brooks, 12, Paige Anne Herring, 12, Stephanie Johnson, 12, Brittany Varner 11, and teacher Shannon Wright, 32

Slaughtered by 'boy who had a lot of killing to do'

By David Osborne
in Jonesboro, Arkansas

THE OLDER of the two boys who were due to be charged later yesterday with capital murder in Tuesday's horrifying attack on fellow pupils at an Arkansas school told friends only one day earlier that he was incensed at being killed by a girlfriend and that "He had a lot of killing to do."

While police would say nothing about a motive in the shooting, in which four pupils and one teacher died, anger over a romance gone wrong as well as a new affiliation with a local gang emerged as the best explanation for the minutes of terror visited on the Westside Middle School,

on the outskirts of Jonesboro, a small university and farming town in north-west Arkansas.

The girlfriend was reported to be 12-year-old Candace Porter. Candace was named as one of 10 others hit in the lunch-hour fusillade who survived and who yesterday were still being treated for their wounds. She was said to be in a stable condition and out of danger last night.

The two accused, identified in newspaper reports as Andrew Golden, 11, and Mitchell Johnson, 13, were to be charged later yesterday at the county detention centre where they have been in custody since Tuesday.

Local prosecutor Brent Davis said that under Arkansas law the pair could be tried only as juveniles. This would

imply that even if they were found guilty and served the strictest sentence they will walk free on their 18th birthdays.

While teachers suggested that both boys had had good records of obedience in the 250-strong school, it seemed that Johnson had boasted recently of joining a gang. He had reportedly been involved in a knife fight on Monday and had spoken to several friends that day about his murderous intentions. No one, however, took him seriously.

"He told us that tomorrow, you will find out if you live or die," one pupil, Melinda Hanson, told reporters. Another, Charles Vanover added: "He told me yesterday that all the people who broke up with him, you know,

he's going to come to school tomorrow and kill them. I thought he was just kidding around."

Mr Davis attempted yesterday to damp down speculation over the motive, however. "I don't think logical explanations or reason will fit this type of situation," he suggested.

Anticipating public outrage at the likely leniency of an eventual sentencing, Mr Davis added that he would "explore all options" to try the boys in a manner to keep them behind bars beyond 18. That would imply intervention in the case by the federal courts.

Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee visited the school yesterday and expressed his dismay over the shooting. "It makes me angry, not so much

at the individual children that have done it as much as angry at a world in which such a thing could happen."

Myriad questions remained unanswered last night. Who, for instance, was the owner of a white van found parked near the crime scene on Tuesday with a stash of weapons inside? And how did the boys get hold of some nine weapons they used to fire off their bullets?

In Arkansas there is no law forbidding minors from owning and using rifles. Only handgun ownership is illegal for children.

The four children killed were identified as Natalie Brooks, 12, Paige Anne Herring, 12, Stephanie Johnson, 12, and Brittany Varner, 11. Sitting ducks, page 13

IRA splits put peace on the brink

By David McKitterick
Ireland Correspondent

THE security forces believe a dangerous new threat to peace in Northern Ireland has developed from a recently-emerged and as yet unnamed breakaway republican group with access to IRA technology.

The group is believed to be responsible for a number of attacks, most recently Tuesday night's mortar attack on Forkhill Royal Ulster Constabulary station in south Armagh. The authorities regard it as a major danger to security in general and to the talks process in particular.

The Forkhill attack and other operations are designed to disrupt the talks, which are now in their final phase. The chairman of the talks, former US Senator George Mitchell, yesterday set a deadline for a deal by 9 April, suggesting that the parties go into continuous session for the previous three nights.

The authorities fear that the period up until then will be punctuated by further attacks emanating both from republicans, including the oew grouping, and loyalists such as the renegade Loyalist Volunteer Force.

The new republican grouping is thought to be headed by dissident IRA members who resigned from the mainstream organisation last November in opposition to the peace process strategy identified with the Sinn Féin president, Gerry Adams, and his supporters.

Their political line is believed to be that the Adams leadership has strayed too far from traditional "Brits out" republicanism. To this they are regarded as supporters of a political grouping styled the "32 County Sovereignty Committee." Much of this group's support is thought to come from disaffected former Sinn Féin supporters.

Another breakaway republican group, the Continuity Army Council, has been carrying out bombing attacks in Northern Ireland towns for several years now, but the new grouping, though only a few months old, appears to have access to more sophisticated technology than the CAC.

In addition to the Forkhill incident it is held responsible for a similar mortar attack on a security installation in Armagh city some days ago. These are the only mortar attacks carried out in Northern Ireland by a group other than the IRA, and as such they demonstrate a fast-increasing destructive capability.

The RUC Chief Constable, Ronnie Flanagan, yesterday contradicted Ulster Unionist claims that recent attacks had involved the IRA. He said: "These attacks have largely been by republican terrorist organisations. They are not the work of the Provisional IRA."

He added, however: "The IRA remains an organisation which is intact and which presents a threat to this society..." IRA's future, page 21

Farewell to welfare as Blair orders Britain to work

By Anthony Bevins
and Fran Abrams

AFTER 50 years' faithful service, Tony Blair's Labour government will today wave good-bye to the Welfare State.

The long-awaited welfare Green Paper, A New Welfare Contract, will make clear beyond doubt that those who can work have a "duty" to do so; those who can provide for their own security should "help themselves" while those who can do neither will be looked after.

Trailing the Green Paper, Mr Blair said during Commons question time: "What is important is that we have a welfare state in which there is work for those who can, security for those who can't, and opportunity for those denied it."

There was no question, the Prime Minister's official spokesman explained later, of offering a low-grade safety net for the destitute. There would be more help for those in the greatest need. Of that, he said, "no one need fear."

But the new welfare system will overturn decades of passive welfare, in which claimants have sat back and

waited for their giro cheques.

In 1948, when the welfare state came into existence, two-thirds of those claiming National Assistance, the precursor to today's Jobseeker's Allowance, were retired. Now, over two-thirds are below retirement age, and the Government is determined to do all in its power to get them off welfare and into work. That is the contract.

They have been given the £5bn New Deal welfare-to-work programme, offering them opportunities of work or training. The Budget will make work pay more than benefits, and the next and final stage is to target the welfare system

on those who really need it.

Today's consultative document will be accompanied by a Commons statement from Frank Field, a politician whose career has been dedicated to this fundamental change - in which people will be offered responsibilities to go with their rights, to break the cycle of dependency and insecurity.

The Green Paper will not contain a detailed shopping list of hard-and-fast policies on each benefit, but MPs are expected to be given an outline battle-plan, showing which legislation is coming up in next autumn's new session of Parliament, and when other

decisions can be expected.

A review of the uprating of the state pension is due to be delivered in June, and a number of other reviews are expected to accompany the comprehensive departmental spending review - timed for delivery in July. That could include answers on the Child Support Agency, benefits for the long-term sick and disabled, and Housing Benefit.

The seemingly intractable problems of housing benefit were exposed yet again yesterday, when successive social security ministers - Tony Blair and Labour - faced scorching criticism from the Commons Public Accounts Committee for

not tackling massive levels of Housing Benefit fraud. The new Government is about to grasp that nettle.

The Commons report said that fraudsters almost over face prosecution, despite the fact that an estimated 400,000 of them are milking up to £2bn from the state each year. Of those who are detected, fewer than one per cent are taken to court. Just under half of all local authorities brought even one prosecution last year.

"The waste of public money on Housing Benefit fraud is massive and inexcusable, and it has gone on for far too long," the report says.

Mary Allen is forced to quit in new melodrama at Royal Opera House

MARY ALLEN resigned last night as chief executive of the Royal Opera House, writes David Lister. Her departure climaxes an extraordinary year in which the ROH has been savaged by a House of Commons select committee, seen its chairman and board resign and some of its most senior staff sacked.

Mrs Allen was strongly criticised by the National Heritage select committee last year over the manner of her move from Secretary-General of the Arts Council, which funds the Royal Opera House, to take over as chief executive of the house. The post was not advertised and the Arts Council not consulted.

Gerald Kaufman, the com-

mittee chairman, repeatedly called for her resignation. But though the ROH chairman, Lord Chaddlington, resigned in the wake of the report, Mrs Allen refused to go and said she would serve under the new chairman Sir Colin Southgate who is also the chairman of EMI.

But yesterday at a heated board meeting Mrs Allen was told by Sir Colin and the board that they wanted an artistic director not an administrator to run the House. Insiders say she argued strongly that it needed "a strong arts administrator to cope with the financial difficulties" at the ROH.

But the board rejected her arguments. They were said to be

shaken by the recent defection of the Royal Opera Company's director, Nicholas Payne, to the English National Opera, and felt the House needed artistic credibility. Mrs Allen was said last night to be extremely upset.

An ROH statement said only that there was "a growing difference of views over the future plans for the organisation".

In truth, Mrs Allen's position has looked unstable following the select committee's report, criticism from the Arts Council (her chairman there Lord Gowrie said he had "bonded too closely" with her in explaining why he did not block her move when he appeared before the select committee) and the fail-

ure of Chris Smith, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, to back her publicly. She has always maintained that the criticism was unfair, saying "If there were mistakes, they were honest mistakes."

The Royal Opera House is currently the subject of an inquiry of opera provision in London being headed by Sir Richard Eyre.

Funding shake-up, page 3



Mary Allen criticised by National Heritage committee

THE NEW ASTRA VAUXHALL

"On the Monopoly board of small batches, it's Mayfair. With a hotel on it."

WHAT CAR? APRIL 1998



QUALITY IS A RIGHT NOT A PRIVILEGE

INSIDE GUIDE: WEATHER, P2 • CROSSWORDS, P32 AND EYE P10 • TODAY'S TELEVISION, EYE P12 • FULL CONTENTS, P2

TOMORROW IN FRIDAY'S EYE

32 pages of film and music

■ Jarvis Cocker: nothing to laugh about

■ John Lyttle: why Kate Winslet is too big for Titanic

■ Portrait of Andrea Quinn, new boss at the Royal Ballet

■ Catherine Deneuve: still Belle de Jour



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Success of Aids drugs brings its own risks

By Jeremy Laurance
Health Editor

THE transformation of Aids from a death sentence to a treatable condition is raising a new spectre among doctors: that it will encourage carelessness about sex and a resurgence of the epidemic.

The extraordinary success of the Aids drugs introduced in the last four years in cutting the death rate from the disease has radically changed patients' lives. But as the threat of full-blown Aids and death recede for those infected with the HIV virus, they are increasingly demanding to know whether they can return to unprotected sex and start families.

The progressively more intense anti-retroviral drugs with which they are being treated dramatically reduce the amount of virus present in the blood. Testimony to their success is contained in a study in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, which shows that among more than 1,200 patients with the severest immunosuppression caused by HIV infection, the incidence of Aids decreased by 73 per cent and deaths by 75 per cent between 1994 and mid-1997.

In New York, Aids deaths fell 29 per cent between 1995 and 1996 and by 44 per cent between 1996 and 1997. Similar falls have been recorded in Canada, France, Germany and Switzerland. One HIV activist quoted in the journal said: "Instead of classes on how to write wills we now need classes on how to find employment."

But if treatments reduce the amount of virus in the blood, they also reduce it in

genital secretions. Does this mean that "unsafe" sex can be safe again? Doctors are unsure. In an editorial, Bernard Hirschel and Patrick Francioli of the 12th World Aids Conference, Geneva, say: "Patients seek our advice about their infectiousness but we are unable at present to provide clear answers."

They warn that Aids campaigns must highlight the limits of current treatments to prevent carelessness and a return to old sexual habits.

The new treatments also raise a new dilemma: when to start the drugs. They are powerful agents with side-effects that can be shrugged off in life-or-death situations but which acquire greater importance as survival prospects improve. Although their effectiveness is proved beyond doubt in patients with severely affected immune systems, in others the balance of advantage is less clear.

The side-effects, which include loss of fat from the body and an excess in the blood, "are likely to matter to young asymptomatic (without symptoms) patients who care about their body image and who may worry about the risk of heart disease in the years ahead."

Drs Hirschel and Francioli say that the treatment which is now saving lives in the West is an "inaccessible dream" for most Aids sufferers who live in the developing world because of its cost: \$12,000 (nearly £7,500) a year. "Nothing is likely to bridge the gap between the rich and poor countries. Only prevention and perhaps some day a vaccine are likely to make a real difference," they say.



Media-friendly: The cast of *Friends* in London yesterday to promote a series for Channel 4. (Back row, left to right) Matt Le Blanc and David Schwimmer; (front) Courtney Cox, Matthew Perry and Jennifer Aniston. Photograph: Peter Macdormid

Railtrack cash plan falls flat

By Randeep Ramesh
Transport Correspondent

Plans for a 10-year, £17bn spending spree on the nation's railways were attacked by the industry regulator yesterday after intervention by the watchdog saw his office launch an immediate investigation into the "commitments" to passengers.

Railtrack, which owns Britain's stations and signalling, published its spending programme, which it described as "a blueprint to regenerate the railways". But John Swift QC, the regulator, said the pro-

gramme contained "very few firm commitments to deliver significant improvements" for passengers and freight customers.

Mr Swift said he would find out if train operators thought Railtrack's management statement met their needs. He received strong backing from the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, who welcomed Mr Swift's action. Industry observers say the plans contain little new money for the network. Despite the headline figure, £16bn was promised last year and a further £640m as part of a deal with Richard Branson's

Virgin group to upgrade the west coast line.

The ride for passengers is also set to get worse. Railtrack identified 15 congestion hot-spots on the network. Despite this, the situation will not improve until 2002 at the earliest. Sir Robert Horton, Railtrack chairman, said: "There are real congestion problems at certain times of the day and these have to be overcome. The problem is in part the need for ever-increasing numbers of passengers on the network." Paul Prescott, a Railtrack director, said: "Some train companies require

to grow by 10 per cent a year."

However this increase in "train miles" has adversely affected punctuality. Figures show an increasing number of poorly performing train services. "This is due to a 5-per-cent increase in train miles," said Mr Prescott.

Aslef, the train-drivers' union, has long criticised Railtrack for its safety record and yesterday Lew Adams, general secretary, said it was launching its own initiative which would see drivers "moderating their speed" over track they considered "dangerous".

Officers suspended pending jail inquiry

By Jason Bennetto
Crime Correspondent

SEVEN prison officers were suspended at a private jail last night after an inquest jury ruled that an inmate awaiting trial had been unlawfully killed after he was placed in a necklock during a violent struggle.

The family of Alton Manning, 33, who died of asphyxia at Blakenhurst prison near Redditch, Worcestershire, in December 1995, immediately called for the prison officers involved to be prosecuted.

The Prison Service announced that seven officers had been suspended at Blakenhurst jail, which is run by the private company UK Detention Services Ltd, while investigations are carried out. The Crown Prosecution Service is believed to be studying the findings to decide whether criminal charges should be brought.

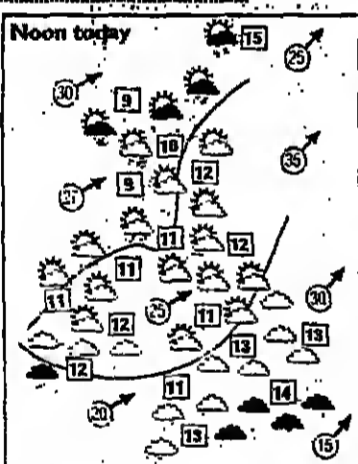
Campaigners yesterday called for an end to use of headlocks as a restraint technique, which is being reviewed, and for the Home Secretary to set up a public inquiry. The Prison Service was accused of failing to heed past lessons of past - this is the third unlawful killing verdict returned for an inmate in jail since 1979.

The unanimous verdict by the inquest jury at Kidderminster town hall, after 15 days of evidence and testimony from 30 witnesses, was greeted by cheers from the public gallery.

The hearing heard how Mr Manning, of Sparkbrook, Birmingham, had pressure placed on his neck at some stage before he was pronounced dead at the privately run jail.

The jurors heard from a Home Office pathologist that the prisoner, who stopped breathing while being removed from a cell, suffered bruising to his back and neck. He died of asphyxia consistent with his breathing becoming impaired while being restrained, they were told.

WEATHER



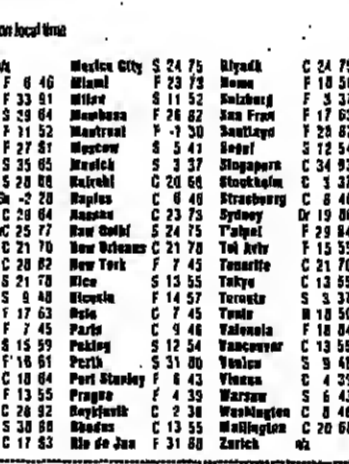
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Most recent available from 0600 local time

City	Temp	Wind	Cloud	Pressure
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Angley	10	10	Overcast	1010
Ayr	11	12	Overcast	1010
Belfast	11	12	Overcast	1010
Birmingham	9	48	Overcast	1010
Blackpool	9	48	Overcast	1010
Bournemouth	9	48	Overcast	1010
Brighton	7	45	Overcast	1010
Bristol	9	48	Overcast	1010
Cardiff	9	48	Overcast	1010
Carlisle	9	48	Overcast	1010
Derby	9	48	Overcast	1010
Dublin	9	48	Overcast	1010
Edinburgh	9	48	Overcast	1010
Exeter	9	48	Overcast	1010
Glasgow	9	48	Overcast	1010



World weather
Most recent available from 0600 local time

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Algeria	17	17	Overcast	1010
Algeria	17	17	Overcast	1010
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Algeria	17	17	Overcast	1010
Algeria	17	17	Overcast	1010



MICHAEL HANLON WEATHER WISE

IF IT were not for a wonderful invention patented 96 years ago, much of the south-east of the United States, including Florida, Alabama, Georgia and the Carolinas, would have remained wilderness, alligator swamp and farmland, instead of being home to some of the most rapidly growing cities in the Union, such as Miami and Atlanta.

All this is down to one man, Willis Haviland Carrier. Like the invention of the elevator, which made the skyscraper possible, Carrier's brainwave - air conditioning - allowed the urbanisation of the Deep South, a place with a truly nasty summer climate - combining very high temperatures and humidity.

Carrier's first patent, for "an apparatus for treating air", was filed in 1902. At-

tempts at air-conditioning had been made before, but as these involved huge quantities of ice that had to be replaced, they were far from practical. Carrier's machines worked on the same principle as the refrigerator, compressing gases with a pump, and allowing them to expand, taking heat from their surroundings.

Initially, only industry was interested in his idea. Carrier's first customer was a Brooklyn printing company, which was having problems in the summer with its colour dyes. But so too the value of airco was realised, and it was reported that "patrons exclaimed with delight when they got through the doorway" of a newly air-conditioned Texan theatre.

Department stores and businesses found they could increase sales and productivity by keeping cool, and by the Fifties airco was common in homes and cars across the country.

Thanks to the ubiquity in the US of Carrier's invention, few Americans would tolerate the sticky and unpleasant conditions still commonly found in British offices, schools, cars and homes in July and August.

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An era ends as racecourse bookies go on line

By Greg Wood
Racing Reporter

THE BRITISH racecourse betting ring, a throwback to a different age which has barely changed since Victorian times, is to undergo the most dramatic and far-reaching reforms in its history over the next 18 months.

Grizzled, ageing bookies calling the odds from the top of upturned wooden crates could begin to disappear as early as this October, under recommendations published yesterday by a committee which has spent many months studying the arcane ways of the

ring. Other changes will include a relaxation of the strict rules on where bookies can stand, and allow their "pitches" to be positioned around the paddock and hospitality areas—in other words, places where it is easy for their customers to reach them. They will also be required to post a bond before being allowed to trade, and make an audio tape recording of all transactions.

The most dramatic change, however, will be in the appearance of the betting ring. For decades, the standard bookie's "joint", the structure from which he operates, has been little more than a hastily erected heap of boxes

and junk metal. The new joint will be a standard construction of coloured, moulded plastic, with a power supply to allow the use of both a tape recorder and, almost inevitably, a computer, since the end is also in sight for traditional bookmakers' tickets.

At present, on-course bookmakers call a punter's bet to a clerk who shares their pitch, and issue a colourful, pre-printed betting ticket which gives the bookmaker's name and a unique number, but nothing more. From 31 December 1999, the ticket will be required to list not just the bookie's name and address, but also the race

time and name, the ticket number, the name of the horse backed, the stake, odds, type of bet and the potential return. A computerised system for handing bets will thus be almost essential.

The average age of bookmakers also seems certain to fall. Until now, a system of "seniority" has governed the allocation of racecourse pitches, with bookies often spending 20 years or more on a waiting list before they are allowed to work at the biggest tracks. Soon though, they will be able to auction their pitches to the highest bidder, which may persuade many of the oldest gentlemen of the ring—several

are well into their 80s—that the time has finally come to retire.

Any radical change will have its casualties, however. The bookies' clerks, whose skill and accuracy in filling out huge ledgers of bets and liabilities, sometimes at the rate of a ticket every four seconds, is one of the wonders of the track, may be redundant when the computers arrive.

Tic-tac, the racecourse semaphore system, should still be essential, however, and one other familiar feature of the joint will surely remain. No bookie, after all, would feel complete without a very deep satchel.



Forever young: The infant dinosaur, perfectly preserved in a slab of limestone. Left, how the animal might have looked. Pictures: Nature

Funds cap on arts companies

By David Lister
Arts News Editor

THE country's biggest arts companies, including the Royal Opera House, Royal Shakespeare Company and National Theatre, are likely to be put on fixed-term funding contracts.

An end to the 50-year-old system by which the same companies, by and large, can expect to continue to receive public money year after year was promised yesterday by the incoming Arts Council chairman Gerry Robinson.

Mr Robinson, who also chairs Granada PLC, was brought in by Culture Secretary Chris Smith to bring a more business-like approach to the Arts Council and arts funding. His first initiative is sure to take the arts world by surprise.

He said at a lunch with arts journalists yesterday that he would be bringing in "funding contracts" ranging from one year to five years for all the Arts Council's clients. When their time was up they would have to prove again that they were worth public money and the council would decide if they were actually good enough. He said this would encompass all the well-known names including the Royal Opera House and the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Mr Robinson said: "We have to have a period of time in which

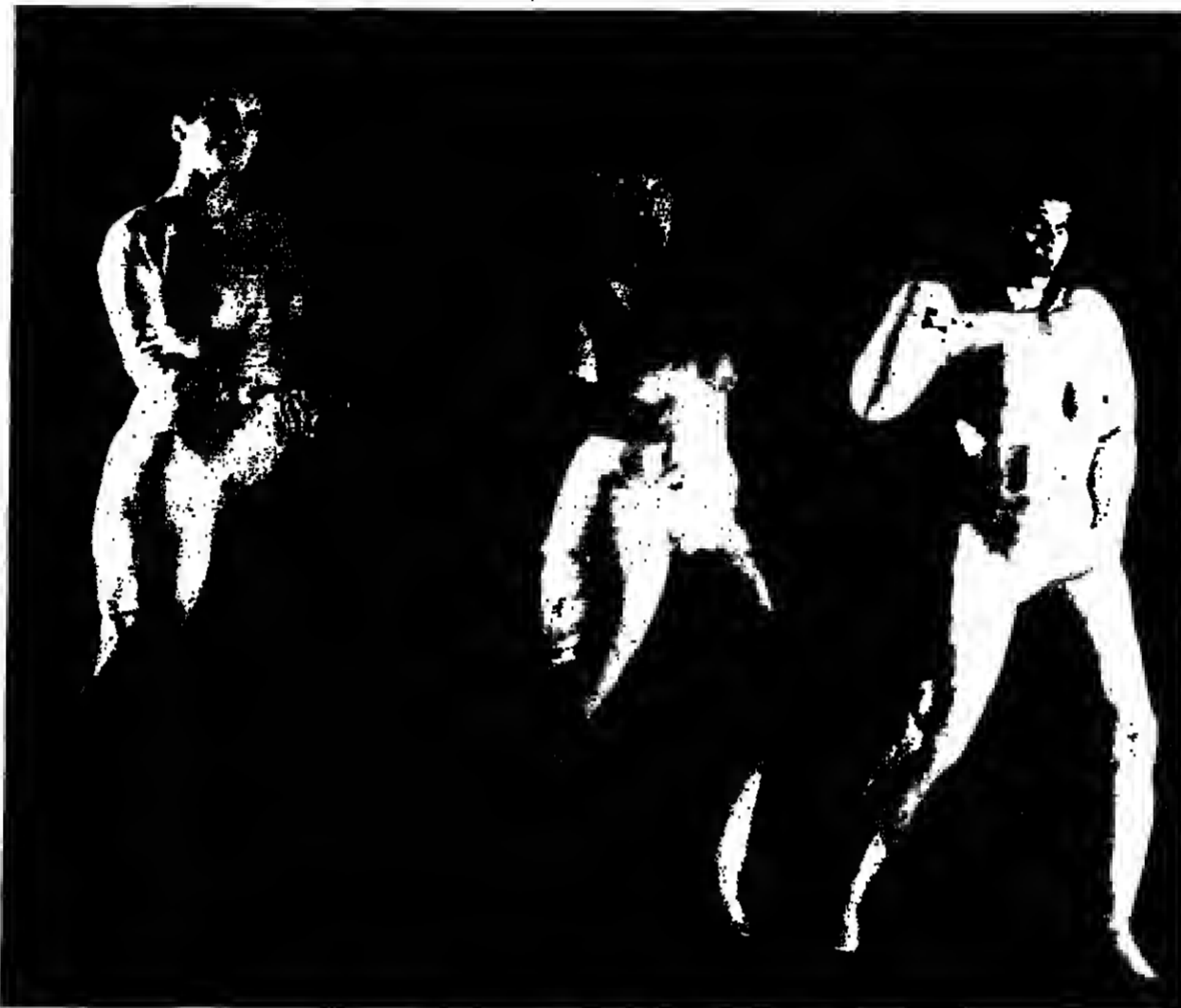
we can say in five years time we will have another look at whether they should have the money. You need a mechanism which enables you to look at it quite freely and make a judgement."

"There is a real problem under the present system that funding just carries on. I think the London Arts Board [which recently cut funding to Greenwich Theatre] has been very brave in saying that certain organisations are not up to the mark."

Mr Robinson also said that the Arts Council had been "ineffective" in recent years and did not seem to have any overall policy. Part of his philosophy he said, was "to fund fewer organisations better".

In the past the council has occasionally ceased funding small companies. But while the major clients may suffer variations in their grants, they have been secure in the knowledge that they are seen in perpetuity as publicly funded flagships. This could now change.

A spokesman for the Royal Shakespeare Company said: "We will have to wait and see what happens. We have to plan several years ahead anyway so we would not be against fixed-term contracts as such. But we would certainly be extremely shocked if there was any thought of us ceasing to be publicly funded."



Subsidised: A performance of Das Rheingold at the Royal Opera House in London

Photograph: Laurie Lewis

Stumbling dinosaur toddler finds a path into posterity

By Nicholas Schoon
Environment Correspondent

ABOUT 113 million years ago, a dinosaur toddler stumbled into a shallow, murky lagoon and drowned. In doing so it gained an extraordinary immortality, for today it is described as the most well-preserved dinosaur fossil ever found.

Muscles, intestines, liver and even traces of the unfortunate infant's windpipe can be seen in the exquisitely-detailed fossil, although—strangely—none of the skin remains.

The reptile was probably less than 2ft long from nose to tail; the exact length will never be known since the end of its tail is missing, as are the lower parts of its back legs. It only had its baby teeth, and the Italian palaeontologists who describe it in this week's issue of the

science journal *Nature* say it was "little more than a hatchling".

The dinosaur fossil was discovered in limestone in the Benevento province of southern Italy, which is well known for its superbly preserved fish fossils.

The rock is the remains of sediments laid down in shallow lagoons with low oxygen levels during the early Cretaceous.

Cristiano Dal Sasso, from the Natural History Museum in Milan, and Marco Signore, of Bristol University, claim that the fossil "shows details of soft anatomy never seen previously in any dinosaur".

A carnivore, it stood on two legs, had front limbs with three sharp claws, and is distantly related to the fearsome *Tyrannosaurus rex*. It is the first dinosaur fossil to be found in Italy, as well as being a species new to science.

Irish autocrat haunted by smell of skeletons in the cupboard

IN THE NEWS

CHARLES HAUGHEY

AUTOCRATIC to the end, former Taoiseach Charles Haughey was yesterday bluntly defending his claim that whatever he and his family accumulated during his years in power is nobody's business but his own, writes Alan Murdoch in Dublin.

He was in the High Court in Dublin flanked by wife Moureen, daughter Eimear, and sons Conor and Sean, to stop in its tracks a Dail-backed tribunal investigating his finances. By extension that inquiry would also delve into the background to a range of government decisions during a cabinet career spanning over 30 years.

Though propped up by a crutch after a riding accident in which he broke a hip, Mr Haughey was in full command of his battling faculties. The man once famous for his terrifying baleful stare denounced the latest investigation into his affair by Judge Michael Moriarty's tribunal.

The aftermath of Haughey's rule has been an avalanche of investigations into a smell from a dusty cupboard marked "Skeletons, property of The Boss." He kept a straight face some months ago when telling a judicial tribunal "I just want to say that I did not have a very lavish lifestyle. My work was my lifestyle." For the record, this is the owner of Abberville, a sumptuously furnished north Dublin Georgian mansion on a 280-acre estate, a yacht and a private island off Kerry.

Other features of a diligent life of public representation include a family-owned helicopter firm run by son Ciaran, loans to which greatly interested tribunal investigations, and a stud farm. Haughey senior also likes fine wines, opulent hotels and debonair female company. The problem is that such indulgence exceeded his ability to pay for it as a salaried politician. Like the third secret of Fatima, most Dubliners expected to go to their graves without hearing the real source of his wealth. But for the disclosure during a family row by Haughey fan and former stores magnate Ben Dunne that he had bailed out the cash-strapped politician to the tune of £1.3m between 1987 and 1992, they would be none the wiser. Haughey at first denied the confirmation the payment.

Suspicion grew that there might be other Ben Dunes. Questions were raised in the Dail about who they might be and what



Haughey: Spent £300,000 a year in the Eighties, several times his salary

they may have got in return. There was much interest in disclosures that Dublin financier Dermot Desmond had loaned cash to refurbish Haughey's yacht and paid in advance for executive helicopter service.

In January Desmond confirmed he provided Haughey with further funds from 1994, two years after he left office. Desmond's stock-brokerage grew rapidly in the late Eighties, aided by a stream of contracts from Haughey's government.

After an initial appraisal of evidence, a full tribunal last summer established that cash gifts to Haughey had been channelled through offshore accounts held by Irish multi-millionaires known as the Ansbacher deposits, at times holding up to £38m. Haughey's personal expenditure in

the Eighties was put at £300,000 a year, several times his salary.

Yesterday Haughey seized on that first tribunal's conclusion that it had made no finding of "political impropriety" against him. This being so, he argued, the setting up of the second tribunal under Judge Moriarty was "constitutionally doubtful, and grossly unfair."


Haughey signalled he was not going to give an inch. He was, he promised, ready to defend every decision he had made as Taoiseach or as a minister right back to 1961. His lawyers claimed the latest tribunal is no more than "a trawl" through his finances, and argue it may be unconstitutional, since it effectively seeks to use recent ethics legislation retrospectively.

FOUR-TIMES Taoiseach Charles Haughey is fighting a reported back-tax and penalties bill from Ireland's Revenue Commissioners of £1.7m.

WHEN BOWING out in 1992 from his impressive offices (known as the "Chris Mehal") he dusted down his Shakespeare and observed to the Dail "I have done 'the state some service' and they 'forgot'. No more of that."

IN 1970 he was acquitted in the Arms Trial amid accusations that funds he controlled as finance minister for the relief of Catholics in Northern Ireland had found its way into the hands of the embryonic Provisional IRA.

ASKED BY a tribunal last year if his earlier false statement about accounts were "pretty economic," he replied: "I hate that phrase. It has been flogged to death."



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مركز المعلومات



Poachers' slip

A MOST interesting copy of a letter on *Guardian-Observer* stationery, signed by the newspapers' editors Alan Rusbridger and Will Hutton, has landed on Pandora's desk. The text of the letter is old noxious stuff: a crude sales pitch designed to lure *Independent* readers to defect sent out in early February. What makes this letter interesting is that it is addressed to "Mrs N Major" at 10 Downing Street, London, SW1. Pandora feels that the boastful claims made by Messrs. Rusbridger and Hutton in the letter are hideously undercut by the fact that they - or their staff - appear not to have noticed that Mrs. Norma Major moved out of 10 Downing Street in the middle of last year. (In the meantime, Pandora has taken steps to ensure that Mrs Major, a loyal *Independent* reader, continues to receive her copy every day at her Huntingdon home.)

Commercial logic

AUTHORS and literary agents on both sides of the Atlantic are incensed by the Bertelsmann purchase of Random House. The deal will reduce the major players in United Kingdom book publishing to just three: Random/Transworld (Bertelsmann-owned), HarperCollins and Viking-Penguin. Random/Transworld will control more than 26 per cent of the UK fiction market and literary agents fear the deadening effect that this will have on formerly lucrative blockbuster novel auctions. At the same time, authors fear that this is yet another example of the "corporatisation" of publishing that has driven so many talented editors out of the profession and left the marketers in control.

However, yesterday Louis Baum, editor of the *Bookseller* magazine, put a refreshingly optimistic view of the deal to Pandora. "Yes, this makes Random/Transworld a formidable player, but I don't think it reduces competition in respect of publishers selling books into the market," he said. He believes that the deal will be good for booksellers and book readers. "This is going to change attitudes. Bertelsmann is the third largest media group in the world. Their willingness to invest in books will make the City more keen to invest in publishing. Everyone will see that there's money to be made. In the end, I think more books are going to be sold in this country as a result."



Teutonic tactics

IN THE meantime, where are the Eurosceptics now that we need them? Where is all the rhetorical thunder and lightning about the fact that our precious British literary culture is rapidly falling under Teutonic control? Before the latest Random House capitulation there was a great British family publishing house called Macmillan that was quietly conquered by the German company Holtzbrinck.

Sparklers and pigeons

CALLING all anti-hunting militants. It's time to pack your black balaclavas and head off to South Africa. The SA government has just announced its intention to shoot all the pigeons in its north-western region. The reason diamond thieves are using the birds to transport their sparkling booty out of the heavily policed zone. According to Manda Msomi, chairman of the SA parliament's public enterprises committee, "The law now is to shoot all pigeons on sight." If you are not the militant type, you might think of expressing your disapproval at this outrage by sending all your diamonds to Pandora's Save the African Pigeon Fund. Then again, you'd be mad if you did that.

Sexgate ripples spread

THE CLINTON Sexgate saga is so popular with readers in America that the usually solemn United States broadsheets are losing their composure in the heat of the battle for good stories. Indeed, hacks from the *New York Times* have been accusing the *Washington Post* of being biased towards Paula Jones and her lawyers, while the *Post's* hacks have come out accusing the *Times* of being partial to Clinton's lawyers. Recently, the *Times* published an article that described a *Post* article as "mostly wrong". Good stuff, the kind of journalism British readers enjoy every day. But the stuffy self-satisfied *New York Times* lost its nerve and only put the story in its final edition, excluding it from the *Times* Internet site.

Pandora

DAILY POEM

The Dry-Cleaner's Son

By Neil Powell

The dry-cleaner's son is ruining my life.
Two years ago, he'd help out Saturdays,
Slight boyish chores rewarded with ice-cream.

Last summer he'd grown lanky, self-aware:
Out in the street, washing his father's van,
They staged a grand balletic water-fight.

Now, taller of the two, he calls me "mate",
Will deputise for dad, or join him in
A loose bravado, male confederacy.

His shirts - today, gigantic hippie flowers -
Are as loud as his crotch-tie; and his former selves
Lost postcards from the summers left behind.

Star poems today and tomorrow come from Neil Powell's Selected Poems (Corgi, £8.95). Neil Powell, who lives in Aldeburgh, Suffolk, has published critical works such as *Carpenters of Light* and *The Language of Jazz* as well as four collections for Corgi since 1977.

Clubbers dance to bouncers' drug-trade tune



Rave on: Criminals are using club bouncers to sell drugs. Photograph Andy Blackmore

By Jason Bennetto
Crime Correspondent

ORGANISED criminals are employing bouncers to sell drugs and using violence to collect "taxes" from other doormen and dealers operating in clubs and pubs, a Home Office study reported yesterday.

The research uncovered direct links between bouncers, criminals and drug dealing, and found corrupt security companies operating a "control the doors, control the floors" strategy. The findings of the study, which examined the use of bouncers in Merseyside and Northumbria, will add pressure on the Home Office to introduce legislation to control the unregulated and booming door-supervisor industry.

Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, has been criticised for dragging his feet on the issue.

Despite repeated promises to regulate the industry, the Home Office has merely carried out a second consultation exercise and insisted that action will follow.

The report, *Clubs, Drugs and Doormen*, carried out by the Home Office's Police Research Group, provides compelling evidence of the widespread illegal activities of bouncers and their

bosses. It said that bouncers were involved in drug dealing in a number of ways.

"Staff may simply turn a blind eye to dealing activity, receive payment in return for permitting dealing on the premises, or act as dealers themselves."

Some bouncers held a stock of drugs which they distributed to dealers working in the clubs once stocks were sold. Women dealers were becoming increasingly popular as they are less likely to be searched.

A study of Liverpool found that well-organised criminals ran a security firm that used violence and bribery to take over the bouncers at clubs and pubs who then controlled the drug supply.

In Newcastle criminals were not so closely involved and were more likely to "tax" bouncers and approved drug dealers who operated in the clubs.

A council door-registration scheme in Newcastle, in which bouncers have to be approved and trained, was praised, but researchers said it was not a panacea and did not prevent all drug dealing.

The expanding dance market, in pubs, clubs, and warehouses, provides criminals with

an opportunity to make huge profits.

A survey last year found that 90 per cent of 517 people in Looe questioned at dance events said they planned to take drugs that evening. About half were going to take cannabis and ecstasy, about 40 per cent amphetamines, and 16 per cent LSD.

Among the recommendations in yesterday's report was for the police to use more undercover teams to clubs, to find out more about bouncer's drug-dealing techniques and to monitor the meo behind security companies providing doormen.

A scheme at the Ministry of Sound club in London, where half the bouncers are hired from the West Midlands and a code of conduct has been drawn up, was also praised as helping drive out criminals.

Local authorities were recommended to set up more doormen-registration schemes and enforce health and safety regulations.

New powers for local authorities to close down clubs immediately where drugs were found to be sold are to come into power in May.

Clubs, Drugs and Doormen is available free from the Home Office, Fax 0171 273 4001

The Liverpool and Newcastle experience

ORGANISED criminals were found to have infiltrated the pub and club scene in Merseyside to sell drugs. One security company operated a "control the doors, control the floors" approach to the distribution of drugs. It moved into Liverpool by buying up existing bouncers with cash bribes or using violence and intimidation against those who refused to co-operate.

The firm's bouncers either sold the drugs to club- and pub-goers directly or took a cut from the doormen.

During a period between January 1995 to December 1996 police inquiries identified 49 bouncers working in Merseyside who were known to them. Nine had convictions for drug offences, one director had a conviction for drug production. A head doorman at one club was facing a charge of conspiracy to supply. Twenty-

eight of the men had convictions for violence including two murders and three attempted murders. The police arrested and jailed three of the men in charge of the company, but within a year a new firm, containing several members of the old one, was operating in Merseyside. Manchester, Warrington, and Southport.

The connection between drugs and bouncers in Newcastle is not as acute as in Liverpool, yet police believe about one in 10 of the estimated 1,200 doormen are involved in crime.

Drug dealers and criminals rely on "intimidation and extreme violence" to force doormen to pay them a "tax" and to allow approved dealers into the clubs and pubs. At least 38 doormen are known by the police. Twenty-five have been convicted of violence, including murder.

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Think different.

Lawrence family felt scorned by police

By Kathy Marks

A SENIOR police officer investigating the murder of black teenager Stephen Lawrence was handed a list of suspects by his parents, which he screwed up into a ball before their eyes, the judicial inquiry into his death was told yesterday.

Doreen Lawrence, 45, Stephen's mother, made an impassioned attack on police in a statement to the inquiry. They had treated the family with disdain, she said, and had kept them in the dark about the progress of the investigation into Stephen's death.

Two liaison officers assigned to the Lawrence family seemed more interested in gathering information about her son than in providing support, she said in a statement read to the inquiry in south London. The officers repeatedly asked them about Stephen's friends and whether he had belonged to a gang.

"They never actually told us what their role was," said Mrs Lawrence. "We were never given any information. As the days went by, we were never made aware of anything that was happening."

The inquiry, chaired by Sir William Macpherson of Cluny, is examining the issues arising from the death of Stephen, 18, who was stabbed by a white gang at a bus stop in Eltham, south-east London, in 1993.

Mrs Lawrence told the inquiry panel that the names of murder suspects were passed to the family by visitors and relatives in the days after Stephen died. Two weeks later, when arrests had still not been made, she gave a list of the names to a senior officer on the investigation, Detective Chief Super-

intendent William Tiley. "He rolled the piece of paper up into a ball in his hand," she said. "I don't think I said anything, I was so shocked."

Mrs Lawrence alleged that police officers were patronising and unsupportive from the outset. When the family first heard from a neighbour that Stephen had been attacked, they telephoned 999 for more information and were told: "It's news to us."

At the hospital, she said, officers did not speak to them at all. "The police did not come and say to us that your son has died, and this is how he died, this is what happened."

The liaison officers appeared mainly interested in people who congregated in the Lawrence's home after Stephen's death, including members of anti-racism groups, she said, adding: "The people in our house were all black. The people who killed my son were white."

Five white local youths were eventually charged with murdering Stephen, but the case never reached trial. Mrs Lawrence said that the family found out about the first arrests from the media.

Constable Linda Bethel, one of the first officers on the scene after Stephen was attacked, told the inquiry yesterday that she did not find out that he had been stabbed until three hours later.

Although he was lying on the pavement in a pool of blood, she did not fetch her first-aid kit from the patrol car. "I did not appreciate that he was in a bad state, that he was going to die," she said.

The public inquiry continues today.



Stepping out: The model Chantelle Stephenson wearing an outfit (dress, £155; shoes, £220) from Moschino's couture collection at the opening of the Milan fashion house's new shop in Conduit Street in the West End of London yesterday. Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

Man quizzed over murder

DETECTIVES investigating the murder of 14-year-old Kate Bushell yesterday arrested a 20-year-old man. He is being questioned at an Exeter police station about the murder of the schoolgirl, who was killed while walking a neighbour's pet dog near her home on the outskirts of the city last November.

Kate's body was discovered by her father, Jeremy, just 300 yards from her home. Her throat had been slashed. Murder hunt police ordered DNA tests on all men living in a half-mile radius of the scene.

Alert over pills

THOUSANDS of packets of paracetamol tablets are being recalled after it was discovered that some were contaminated with aspirin. M&A Pharmaceuticals Limited is withdrawing from sale packs of 25 500mg Mandanol tablets after concerns that the rogue pills could be a danger to children or those people allergic to aspirin.

Drink-drive limit

A CROSS-PARTY committee of peers last night called for the drink-drive limit to be reduced to about one pint of beer.

While backing the European Union proposed limit for the UK of 50mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood, the committee refused to support an EU directive to harmonise the drink-drive laws across Europe.

Doncaster arrest

DETECTIVES investigating allegations of corruption at Doncaster yesterday arrested a Labour councillor. Michael Collins was arrested on suspicion of false accounting in a long-running inquiry into expenses, foreign trips and relationships between councillors and developers.

Border demand

THE Home Secretary, Jack Straw, is to demand that the Belgian government take action to halt the flow of bogus asylum seekers arriving in Britain after being ordered out of Europe's "open borders" area.

Blair vows to fight crime and racism

By Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

THE crime and racial discrimination that make the lives of so many members of the ethnic minorities intolerable would be tackled by the Labour government, Tony Blair said last night.

Speaking at a London dinner for about 350 successful Asian business people, the Prime Minister said: "I want to see your success extended to others. And that can be helped by a government willing to tackle those things that make life intolerable for too many people."

In particular crime and discrimination. I am proud that Britain is a multicultural society that works. The modern Britain I want to create is worth nothing if it is built on intolerance towards those of a different colour, religion or beliefs.

"Cultural diversity enriches Britain. The contribution of the Asian community makes Britain a better place to live. You are central to Britain's strength in the future. That is why we will continue to promote opportunities for all across all parts of government and society. Because any society that dis-

criminate against people because of their background is not just a society lacking morality, but a waste of real talent."

At the start of Prime Minister's questions in the Commons yesterday, Mr Blair told MPs that he would be attending the "Asian 200" dinner, and there was a roar of approval when he said he was going "both to celebrate the enterprise of the Asian community and reiterate our total opposition to racism in all its forms."

Last night, in his Café Royal speech, he said: "We will tackle under-representation across

key areas of society... And we are tackling crime, especially among young people. Crime levels are far too high. Especially in the inner-city areas where many Asian businesses are located and where many Asians live. And be in no doubt that we will not tolerate racial harassment."

Following *The Independent's* call for a political stand to be taken against racism, Alex Salmond, leader of the Scottish National Party, said yesterday that once the Scottish Parliament had been set up, his party would be introducing strong

anti-racism laws, going beyond existing British legislation. "Scotland's reputation as a place of tolerance and ethnic diversity is precious to the SNP and to all who live here," he said.

The Commission for Racial Equality also announced that it had lifted the threat of issuing the Ministry of Defence with a formal Non-Discrimination Notice, but under a partnership agreement signed by Sir Charles Guthrie, Chief of the Defence Staff, the CRE is to remain closely involved in developing racial equality practices in the services until at least 2003.

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Film-world levy to put Britain in the frame

By David Lister
Arts News Editor

THE Government is asking the film industry to pay a voluntary levy in order to raise £15m a year for training, distribution and script development.

The Film Policy Review Group, chaired by the film minister, Tom Clarke, and Stewart Tili, chairman of Polygram Film Entertainment, has asked the industry to pay half a per cent of the film and video companies' film revenues. It has also recommended that the Government open a UK film office in Los Angeles to entice Hollywood producers to make films in Britain.

The group was set up by the culture minister, Chris Smith, with the objective of finding ways of improving the market share of British films. It also wants to see film education in schools and the Arts Council switching money away from production of new British films and into development and distribution.

Mr Smith said yesterday it was planned to have the voluntary levy in place by next year and the film office in Los Angeles up and running by this September. Mr Clarke added: "This report is the biggest review of British film for 30 years. It is not a quick fix."

"Rather, a logical series of interlocking proposals which will in time create a more robust and competitive industry to benefit of British audiences and the British economy."

But the initiative was condemned as "misbegotten" by the film critic Alexander Walker. He said there was too much emphasis placed on big money, as successful pictures like *Mrs Brown* and *The Full Monty* "could not have been smaller".

He also said: "We are already known in Hollywood for what we make. We don't need rebranding or promoting out of our class or beyond our creative powers."

"Hollywood isn't really a creative industry, it is an imitative one. What's imitated is the last big success and this has made for a formulaic predictability, compared with the freshness of our own one-off approach."

Film publicist Sara Keene, who was on one of the review group sub-committees, defended the notion of film education in schools: "If you educated people about film, then they demand better films and will not be satisfied with formulaic and lightweight Hollywood-style movies."

Further proposals in the report aim to strengthen the supporting infrastructure for developing the film industry. The report recommends that the statutory definition of a British film should be amended to make it more practical and user-friendly. Additionally, a new definition of a "culturally British film" should be introduced to assist monitoring and marketing. Mr Smith said: "The Government places special emphasis on the creative industries. They make up a huge and growing part of our economy, bigger even than manufacturing and with limitless potential as new forms of communication make access to creative input ever easier and more enticing."



Flying the flag: Ralph Fiennes in a scene from *Oregan*, a forthcoming British film backed by American money, which is being shot in Britain and in Russia

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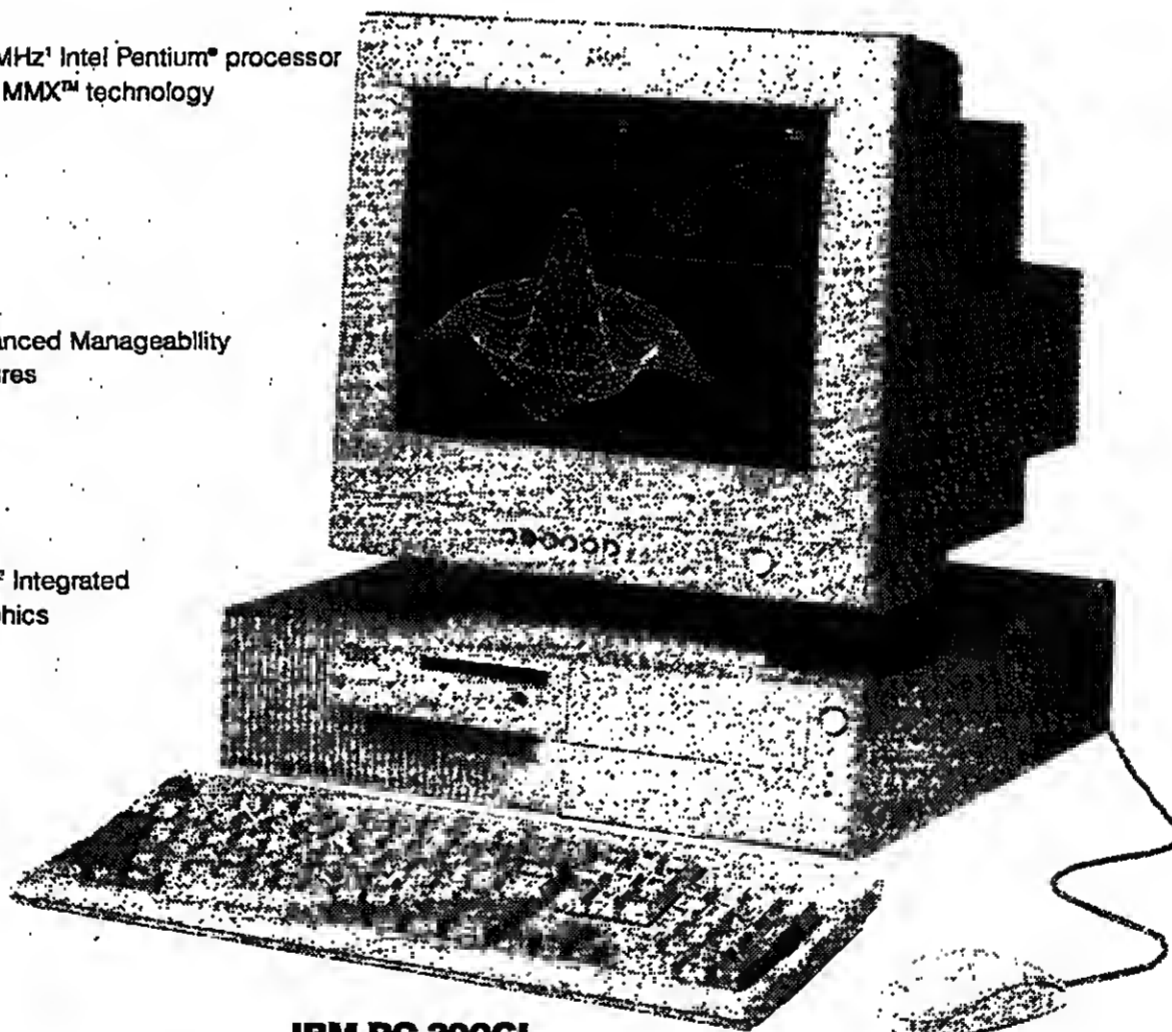
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Solutions for a small planet

Wildlife cost in water wars

By Nicholas Schoon
Environment Correspondent

BIG cuts in water bills could leave wildlife and wetlands high and dry and polluted, conservationists argued yesterday.

The Environment Agency, the Government's leading green watchdog, said it was possible to have five years of unchanged bills while still safeguarding rivers, lakes and marshes.

It joined pressure groups attacking the industry's economic regulator, Ian Byatt, head of Ofwat, for saying he wants an across-the-board cut in bills in 2000. This, they claim, pre-empt the debate about what it will cost to protect the environment.

Mr Byatt and other combatants in England and Wales' water war were on the platform at a London conference organised by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. At issue is the limits on household water bills which will be imposed on the water companies for the years from 2000 to 2005.

Mr Byatt plays the lead role in setting them, but the Secretary of State for the Environment, Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott, decides the balance of power between the environment, customers and

water-company shareholders.

The price limits will not be settled until next November. Until then, there is a three-way fight, with distrust and hostility between the parties, all of which could be sensed yesterday's. In one corner is Mr Byatt, determined to push through price cuts. The average bill, £243 this year, has doubled since privatisation in 1989; even once inflation is accounted for, the increase works out at nearly 40 per cent.

In the second corner are the Environment Agency and English Nature, the Government's wildlife protection arm. They fear that too little money will be devoted to improvements to smaller sewage works and boreholes needed to protect rivers, lakes and bogs.

The third group is the water companies, anxious to protect profits and shareholder dividends. On hand yesterday was Mr Prescott's deputy, the environment minister Michael Meacher. His speech covered all the conflicts, noted the decision for the Government on water bills was difficult, and gave away nothing about what it would be. But, after railing at water "fat cats" in opposition, Labour will find it tempting to endorse a cut in bills.

Targets for GCSEs

SECONDARY schools should set targets for 16-year-olds' GCSE results, Stephen Byers, the school standards minister, said, suggesting that local authorities might agree the targets with their schools, writes Judith Judd.

Ministers have not yet decided whether to set national targets for GCSEs similar to those for 11-year-olds. Local education authorities already have to agree targets in English and maths at the end of primary school. They must also agree targets with individual schools.

But Mr Byers, who was speaking at a Local Govern-

ment Association conference, made it clear that local education authorities must not "nanny" schools. As he issued a new code of practice outlining authorities' powers to intervene in schools, he warned that the power should be used sensibly. Authorities should go into a school "only if there is reasonable cause for concern. We believe schools must be responsible for their own performance," he said.

The new code tries to strike a balance between the powers of local authorities on the one hand and heads and governors on the other.

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Artist 'carried remains on bike'

AN ARTIST "trying to understand death" rode a motorcycle through London carrying stolen bits of dead bodies wrapped in bin-liners inside a rucksack, a court was told yesterday.

Anthony-Noel Kelly, 42, a former butcher, who made silver and gold-coloured sculptures from the parts, told police the largest and heaviest was the head and torso of an old man.

Fortunately, preserving fluid they had floated in for at least 18 years at the Royal College of Surgeons' headquarters had kept them "limp", and he had no trouble folding the arms across the chest for easier transportation. Southwark Crown Court in south London was told.

Mr Kelly, of Clapham, south London, and Niel Lindsay, 25, a former trainee lab technician from Stoke Newington, north London, both deny stealing parts of dead bodies from the college between June 1991 and November 1994. Mr Kelly also denies dishonestly handling them. The case continues.



Canadian walkabout: Prince William shaking hands with admirers gathered to greet him in Vancouver yesterday. Prince Charles and his two sons are on the family's first official visit to North America since Diana, Princess of Wales died last summer. Photograph: Jeff Vinnick/Reuters

Publisher fights with 'Mail' over Diana book

By Louise Jury

THE *Daily Mail* and a London publishing house are locked in a disagreement over a biography of Diana, Princess of Wales by Richard Kay, the journalist closest to the Princess.

The newspaper said it has signed a deal with Bantam to turn a series of articles into a book. But the publisher is playing down the newspaper's involvement and has heavily promoted the book - *Diana, The Untold Story* - at the London Book Fair, emphasising the Kay authorship.

The newspaper and publisher will meet next week to discuss how the book should be marketed for the launch on 10 July.

Among matters to be clarified will be the billing of Geoffrey Levy who was co-author of the series of newspaper articles. Mr Levy was not mentioned in a glossy brochure at the fair or in the publisher's catalogue.

Mr Kay is well-known as the princess's confidante, but has always been extremely sensitive about the friendship and his close relations with her family. He attended her funeral as a private guest and refused to write about it.

A book by him "unveiling the truth about her childhood, her ill-fated marriage to Charles, the men who came into her life..." in the words of the publisher's brochure, would be a publishing coup.

The catalogue says: "[Richard Kay] feels that his role remains to put the record straight about the life of the princess and describes a very different woman from the bitter bulimic portrayed in Andrew Morton's biography... From his special standpoint as Diana's mouthpiece, Kay tells the untold story".

A spokesman for the *Daily Mail* said last night that it was the newspaper's own venture and that it had received the £50,000 advance, not Mr Kay, as *The Independent* has reported.

A spokesman for the newspaper said they had made a "staggeringly large cheque" to the princess's memorial fund, set up to raise money for her

charities, when they had begun the *Diana, The Untold Story*, series. "If you rang up the memorial fund and asked them how they felt, they would apologise about Richard Kay, Geoffrey Levy and the *Daily Mail*", the spokesman said.

The newspaper refused to say whether any of the proceeds of the book would go to the two reporters. But the spokesman said Richard Kay had received the information contained in the series as a *Daily Mail* reporter and that information belonged to the newspaper.

The book will bind together the 12-part series with an introduction: Adrian Singleton, who signed the deal for Bantam,



The brochure promoting the book at the London fair

part of the Macmillan group, said there would be a new 2,500-word introduction, but the *Daily Mail* insisted yesterday that the book would contain nothing which had not been published in the newspaper.

Mr Singleton said he expected it to be a success. "We expect to sell an awful lot of copies. It happens to be an extremely good book, it's beautifully written and a great story."

No mention was made of the *Daily Mail* or Mr Levy in the information prepared for the London Book Fair because that was a rights fair for foreign buyers. Mr Singleton said: "I haven't decided yet whether I'm going to call it a *Daily Mail* book."

Trustees of Diana's memorial fund last night refused permission for an American toy firm, Hasbro, to make a *Sindy* doll looking like the princess.

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مكتبة من الامم



Aquatic encounter: Valerie Taylor, a leading diver and underwater photographer, in a tank with sharks yesterday at the London Aquarium to promote the London International Dive Show which will be held at Olympia, west London, on Saturday and Sunday
Photograph: John Voos

MoD concealed radiation leak at A-bomb base

By Jeremy Laurence
Health Editor

VITAL information about the release of radioactivity after an accident at Greenham Common airbase was withheld by the Ministry of Defence from the government-appointed committee set up to investigate it, a report says today.

Members of the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment (Comare) were "quite angry and disturbed" when they found that details of the 1958 accident, in which a B-47 bomber was destroyed, had been concealed, Professor Bryn Bridges, the chairman, said yesterday.

It is the third time the committee has been lied to since it was established a decade ago to advise the Government on the effects of radiation in the environment. Professor Bridges said: "I hope the climate of disclosure is changing. The public would expect it to change."

The latest case of non-disclosure meant a 1989 investigation by the committee into the high incidence of childhood cancer in west Berkshire had to be reopened. That in-

vestigation considered whether the rate could have been caused by radioactivity released from the three nuclear establishments in the area, at Aldermaston, Burghfield and Harwell. It concluded that the radioactivity from these sources was too low but did not know about the possibility of a release from the airbase.

In 1996 the Department of Health asked the committee to return to the issue after the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament said, on the basis of a secret MoD report, that a nuclear weapon had been damaged in the Greenham Common accident, releasing a burst of radiation.

In today's report the committee says there is nothing to suggest, on the basis of the information supplied to it, that a nuclear weapon was involved in the accident, in which an aircraft preparing for an emergency landing dumped fuel in the wrong part of the airbase, destroying the B-47 on the ground. Levels of radioactivity recorded by the MoD in 1961 were no higher than known releases from the Atomic Weapons Research Establish-

ment at Aldermaston studied in the committee's earlier report and were too low to account for the excess childhood cancers.

Professor Bridges said the excess of cancers was not unique to west Berkshire. Other counties, including Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, also have high rates which are unexplained. Although the report confirms the earlier finding, that radioactivity in the area cannot explain the cancer cluster, the committee remains concerned that the public will lose trust in its work unless organisations can be depended on to co-operate. Professor Bridges, of Sussex University, said: "The MoD is a major player in the nuclear field and its responsibility is no less than other sectors of the nuclear industry to make relevant information available."

The MoD had been "caught in an impasse" because the relevant documents were classified secret. "They couldn't tell us they existed, and because we didn't know they existed, we couldn't ask for them. As soon as we knew of them and asked for them [following the CND report], we got them."

Young men turn to unhealthy pub life

By Glenda Cooper
Social Affairs Correspondent

MORE young men are turning to unhealthy pub-based lifestyles, drinking and smoking too much and seeing games of snooker or pool as their favourite exercise.

According to the General Household Survey, compiled by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), one in eight young men aged 18 to 24 drinks on average more than 50 units of alcohol a week when the Department of Health recommends no more than 21 units.

The proportion of young men drinking more than the recommended limit reached its highest level in 1996, with more than four in ten men exceeding the limit.

Young men were also more likely than any other age group to smoke. In 1996 43 per cent smoked compared to 37 per cent in 1988. Teenagers were most likely to smoke high-tar cigarettes with 79 per cent of men and 66 per cent of women doing so. However, they did smoke fewer cigarettes, with 16 to 19-year-old men smokers

averaging 82 cigarettes per week and women 68, compared to 111 and 96 for men and women smokers overall.

Social class plays a large part in determining how likely you are to smoke. The ONS found that men in households headed by someone in unskilled manual work were four times as likely to smoke as men from a professional household. Women, in similar circumstances, were three times as likely to smoke.

However, the reverse is true when it comes to drinking where professional women were three times as likely to drink more than the recommended levels than those living in unskilled households.

Young women also showed a marked tendency to drink more than the suggested levels with a quarter of 18- to 24-year-olds drinking more than 14 units a week compared to one in seven in 1984.

Men drink on average 16 units per week compared to 6.3 for women. Exercise for men commonly consisted of a game of snooker or pool, whereas women preferred swimming and keep-fit. For leisure activ-

ities 99 per cent of adults had watched television in the four weeks before being interviewed. There was an increase in the number of people reading with two-thirds of adults saying they had read a book in the weeks before interview compared with 54 per cent in 1977.

We are also becoming a nation more obsessed about its well-being, according to the General Household Survey. One in 16 people said they had an acute illness which restricted their activity compared with 8 per cent in 1972.

"These are self-reported so it is a question of perception of illness," said Paul Hunter, a researcher for the GHS. "But greater expectation of a healthy lifestyle could be the cause."

Nearly one in five of adults said they were anxious or depressed, with a greater proportion of women than men reporting this. Anxiety and depression was highest amongst women of 75 and over.

■ *Living in Britain. Results from the 1996 General Household Survey* is available from the Stationery Office price £39.50.



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Cannabis marchers to test law with dope sandwiches

By Graham Ball

THE former drugs smuggler Howard Marks is to test a loophole in cannabis laws this weekend by offering himself for arrest for eating sandwiches made up of cultivated marijuana seeds.

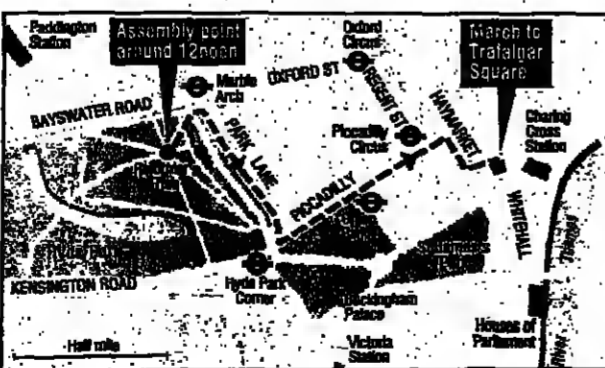
In yesterday's *Independent* it was reported that police chiefs are urging the Home Office to bring in new laws banning the trade in cannabis seed and dope-growing equipment.

At present it is completely legal to buy, sell and possess cannabis hemp seeds but it is illegal to grow them.

The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) is lobbying the Home Secretary to close what they consider to be a serious legal loophole.

Mr Marks will make his move on Saturday, following the *Independent* on Sunday's criminalisation cannabis march and rally in Trafalgar Square. The plan to expose the inconsistency of the present law is the brainchild of a Glastonbury-based drug campaigner who has changed his name from Robert Christopher to Free Rob Cannabis.

Mr Cannabis has been in contact with the Home Office Action Against Drugs Unit and



ascertained that in their view the sprouting of cannabis seeds is deemed to be cultivation and therefore against the law.

"After Saturday's march Howard Marks is to join me at Charing Cross Police Station where we will offer ourselves for arrest for the crime of distribution and possession of 'sprouted hempseed' sandwiches," said Mr Cannabis whose Free Medical Marijuana Foundation distributes cannabis by post to those who self-administer the drug to alleviate medical ailments.

"According to the Home Office we will be in breach of the law despite the fact that sprouting hempseed is one of the most nutritious balanced food sources known to man. The

food is also entirely drug free, containing no THC [the psychoactive ingredient of cannabis] whatsoever", said Mr Cannabis.

Howard Marks, who served eight years in an American prison for cannabis trading in the 1980s and is now a best-selling author, deplores the ACPO proposals.

"It seems that the police are determined to pull in the wrong direction, despite the obvious recent changes in public attitudes. Banning the sale of seed will not make any difference to the overall quantity consumed. It will just drive the trade further underground", he said. ■ For more information on Saturday's march call 0181-964-2692.



London calling: If Chris Patten (left) ran, his likely rivals would include Lord Archer (second left), Simon Hughes, Glenda Jackson and Trevor Phillips

Tories press Patten to join race for Mayor of London

By Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

SENIOR Conservatives last night were making a renewed appeal to Chris Patten, former governor of Hong Kong, to throw his hat in the ring for the first elected Mayor of London after declaring it a "real job with real power".

He refused to stand until he was convinced it was a real job, but a friend said: "We are hoping he will now decide to stand. There are real powers for the new mayor." Mr Patten is seen by some Tories as the best hope to stop Lord Archer, the author, and so far the most enthusiastic campaigner for the post.

Frank Dobson, the Health Secretary, was emerging as Tony Blair's preferred choice to run

against Ken Livingstone, the former GLC leader, and Labour MP who announced yesterday he would be standing.

Mr Dobson has made it clear he wants to continue with his Cabinet role, but that could change next year if he was invited to stand. He is viewed by the Labour leadership as the strongest candidate to beat Mr Livingstone, a member of the party's national executive with a following from his days as the charismatic boss of the GLC.

Glenda Jackson, transport minister for London, will also declare her hand after the May 7 referendum, which is expected to be overwhelmingly in favour of having an elected mayor. The Tories did a U-turn, and confirmed yesterday they would be campaigning with

Labour and the Liberal Democrats for a "yes" vote, putting the result beyond doubt.

The Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, gave the clearest signal so far that the elections for mayor and assembly will be brought forward to autumn, 1999 to put both in place in time for the millennium, and well before the next election.

Mr Prescott said the new mayor will be "a powerful figure" with an electorate of over 5 million voters.

The Mayor will be elected by supplementary vote, allowing voters to mark their first and second choices of candidate, while the 25-member assembly will be elected by the additional-member system, with 14 directly elected by the first-past-the-post vote and 11

drawn from London-wide lists to reflect the position of the parties. It is likely Labour will ensure places for women and ethnic minorities by this system.

The white paper unveiled by Mr Prescott will put the Mayor and the directly elected assembly in charge of a £3.3bn budget with powers over police, fire, and transport services, buses, roads, river services and a say in the future of London Underground. There will be a new 23-strong Metropolitan Police Authority, with 11 drawn from the assembly. The Home Secretary will appoint 11 members and one will be drawn from the district councils outside London.

The most potentially controversial powers are over the boroughs, and Sir Norman Fowler, Tory environment

spokesman, protested that importance of the boroughs was being reduced. The Mayor will have strategic power of planning, with the right to reject planning permission for developments that do not fit in with his plans; disputes will be decided by the Secretary of State for the Environment.

The Mayor will set the Budget, which will have to be approved in a vote each year by the assembly.

The Government has yet to decide where the greater London authority (GLA) will be based, but possible locations for its offices include County Hall, the former GLC building; offices at Canary Wharf and Admiralty Arch, which was used for the homeless at Christmas.

Leading article page 20



Turn again: Ken Livingstone as his famed predecessor, during his time as GLC supremo

Role models

London: 5 million voters; directly elected; four-year term; powers wide ranging, and cannot be sacked by assembly.
Munich: Christian Ude (Social Democrat); 1.3 million voters; directly elected; six-year term; moderate to strong powers as chief executive of the city.



New York: Rudy Giuliani (Republican, above); 7.5 million voters; directly elected; four-year term; very strong powers – personally appoints main departmental heads, except police chief.
Chicago: Richard Daley (Democrat); 1.3 million voters; directly elected; four-year term; powers weak but control of party machine can enhance position.



Paris: Jean Tiberi (Gaullist, above); 2.2 million voters; indirectly elected; six-year term; moderate-to-strong powers but central government retains some key powers over city.

Barcelona: Pasqual Maragall (Socialist); 1.7 million voters; indirectly elected; four-year term; moderate powers but stronger if controls a party with a majority.
Rome: Francesco Rutelli (Radical Green); 2.8 million voters; directly elected but linked to party lists; four-year term; moderate powers.
Sydney: Frank Sartor (Independent); 4,000 voters; directly elected; four-year term; weak powers.
Tokyo: Yukio Aoshima (Non-partisan); 11.5 million voters; four-year term; strong powers – can veto assembly decisions and dissolve assembly for new elections.

Few black faces in the corridors of power

By Randeep Ramesh

LONDON is the capital, not only of the country, but of Black Britain. Yet one of the few places you will have to look hard for London's ethnic minorities is in the city's corridors of power.

At present a little more than 10 per cent of the capital's 700-plus councillors are black, and none head local authorities – despite making up a quarter of the population. Under the present system – and that proposed for the mayor and the Greater London Authority – there is little chance for a change.

For London's black population, the ever-growing gap between population and political representation leads to a spiral of little political representation, followed by disenchantment, followed by low voter registration and finally by the frustration of a minority unable to master its own destiny.

Too apocalyptic? Not according to a survey for *Time Out*, the London news and events magazine, of 18- to 35-year-old black people. It found last year that only half of those questioned were registered to vote and one in five would not turn up on election day. The reason for staying away was "they felt excluded from a white-dominated political process".

Interestingly when asked what would change their minds, nearly 45 per cent replied the strongest motive to vote would be "more black candidates".

The net result is that although more than 85 per cent of Afro-Caribbeans and 70 per cent of Asians cast their votes for Labour in the last general election, the effect is diluted because the reduced number of ethnic minority citizens likely to vote.

Why does this happen? In a word, discrimination. It is not just that white electorates are reluctant to vote for ethnic minority candidates, but party hierarchies stymie black politicians' progress.

This analysis was used to promote another minority – women in politics. The Labour Party introduced "women-only" short lists before the 1997 election and saw the number of female MPs rise from 63 to 120 last year. It was only stopped because the courts declared it illegal.

In the United States, a more radical move in 1990 was initiated by President Bush's Justice Department. Officials baldly stated that racism made it impossible for blacks and Latinos to get elected without help.

So a programme of gerrymandering was sanctioned – creating congressional districts with "minority majorities". It got results. The number of black Congressmen and women rose from 22 to 39 in 1992. Again the judiciary intervened and re-drew the boundaries.

Spin doctors may not prescribe them – but these bitter pills may be the only way to treat the electoral malaise of under-representation in London.

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طريق من الامم

Serb leader stokes fires of war in Kosovo

By Steve Crawshaw
in Glodjane

IT IS the same pattern, all over again. One destroyed house, and more badly damaged. Four Albanian dead, and one Serb policeman. Both sides blame the other and expect things to get worse. Another Balkan war is on the way.

In Bonn, the six-member contact group on Yugoslavia - Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, and the United States - met to decide what to do about the exploding violence in the Albanian majority Serbian province of Kosovo.

They decided, in effect, that the answer was not very much. Theoretically, sanctions will be imposed in four weeks time if President Slobodan Milosevic fails to initiate peace talks with Kosovo's Albanians. That hesitant proposal suggests the West remains as confused as it always has been about how to deal with the Yugoslav leader.

In the village of Glodjane, where the latest killings in Kosovo took place, the fire has been well stoked. Brutality begets bitterness, and determination. As you turn off onto the road that leads to Glodjane, 50 miles west of the Kosovo capital, Pristina, Albanian men greet you with victory signs, as though their battle with the Serbs was already won.



Watching brief:
An ethnic Albanian boy in the village of Dubrava, 100km west of Pristina, capital of Kosovo. Last night there were clashes in the village between Serb police and members of the Kosovo liberation who are calling for independence.

Photograph:
Radu Sighed/Rauners

was eager to prevent him giving his eye-witness account. The man in the suit held a furive conversation, accompanied by emphatic hand gestures. Speaking freely to a foreign journalist was clearly not a good idea.

Serb headlines talked yesterday of how the police had "liquidated terrorists": the front page headline in the Albanian-language *Koha Ditore* listed the villages that had been attacked, like a role call of death.

These clashes seem certain to be only a foretaste of what is yet to come. Mr Milosevic unleashed Serb nationalism in Kosovo as a way of strengthening his power. The Balkan wars that began in 1991 have helped to keep him in power. Now, it may be Kosovo's turn.

There is a general expectation here - much stronger than ever before - that Kosovo is on the edge of conflagration. "We want freedom - or we want war," said one man in the old town of Pecs just a few miles away from the latest violence, yesterday.

The Serbs fear what might happen to them. But the Albanians are still more traumatised. "We live like dead people. We have nothing," said one Albanian in the village of Dubrava, where Tuesday's ambush was said to have taken place. "How can this go on?"

Doubts pushed aside as Emu gathers pace

By Katherine Butler
in Brussels

THE European Commission cleared the way yesterday for 11 countries to join the single currency in 1999 and eased the path for Britain to become the 12th.

Casting aside doubts about glaringly high debt levels, particularly in Italy and Belgium, Brussels confirmed that all the applicants for first-wave membership, except Greece, now meet the economic entry conditions laid down in the Maastricht treaty.

A special EU summit at the beginning of May is set to endorse membership of the Euro zone from next January for France, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Ireland, Finland, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Austria.

The Commission's report makes it clear that membership of the Exchange Rate Mechanism is a pre-condition to joining Emu, but in a decision with significant implications for Britain, dropped its insistence that this must be for two years. Britain, which was ejected from the ERM in 1992, has disputed the interpretation of the rule on ERM membership, arguing that currency stability over time, not technical membership, is the key. While Yves-Thibault de Silguy, the EU monetary affairs commissioner, confirmed yesterday that formal membership of the mechanism is required, he did not specify for how long.

Jacques Santer, the Commission President, went further in explaining how Italy and



Jacques Santer: Concession to Italy and Finland

Finland were cleared for membership, despite having been in the ERM for less than the prescribed time. "Guaranteed stability of exchange rates prevailed over participation in the ERM for two years," he said.

The Commission claimed

in its report that EU economies have converged to the point where the Euro can now succeed.

Critics who claim the Maastricht criteria have been fudged to permit the realisation of a political dream will point to a separate report on convergence from the European Monetary Institute, the forerunner of the future European Central Bank.

The EMI praised overall progress, but singled out Italy and Belgium for criticism on failing to bring debt levels down. The EMI also raised doubts about the ability of France and Germany to consolidate their public finances.

In its own verdict, the Dutch Central Bank yesterday echoed concerns voiced in recent weeks by senior Dutch political figures about Italy. Its report concludes that genuine convergence, despite a healthy picture

in terms of interest rates, public deficits and inflation, remains fragile.

But supporters of Emu rejected claims that fudging, or the convenient conjuncture of economic cycles, had brought about the right figures on the day.

"This is the beginning of a new era. We are giving ourselves a monetary tool which will be one of the most important in the world," Jacques Chirac, the French President, said.

Mr Santer said the Commission had studied a range of factors to determine whether member states could stick to the tough fiscal disciplines they have achieved to qualify.

EU commissioner Sir Leon Brittan hailed the Commission's verdict as a powerful rebuttal to single-currency opponents. "At first they argued that the economic situation meant that Emu could not possibly go ahead on time and would have to be postponed: they have been proved wrong. Then they said only a handful of countries would be in a position to qualify: wrong again... today's report shows that the progress made has been so huge that no conceivable allegation of fudging can explain it away."

According to the Commission's assessment, all but Greece, of the member states who want to join in the first wave, have public deficits which are at or below the 3 per cent of GDP allowed by the treaty.

Debt in only four countries was below the 60 per cent of GDP target in 1997, but almost all have reversed the trend of rising debt, so qualify.

Currency approval

TONY BLAIR gave a clear signal yesterday that Britain will accept the findings of the European Commission approving 11 countries for joining the European single currency, in spite of it being attacked as a "fudge" by the Conservatives, writes Colin Brown, Chief Political Correspondent.

The report raised the possibility of Europe launching a "soft" single currency which the Tories believe threatens to drive the pound higher, and risk recession in Britain, and could lay down the battle lines between the parties for the general election.

Mr Blair expressed concern about the "very high level of the pound" for exporters, but firmly rejected claims by William Hague, the Tory leader, that the Commission report had "fudged" the debt ratios of eight of the 11 countries.

The Prime Minister told MPs: "There are a range of criteria to take into account. When we take our decision as president of the European Commission we will do it on the basis of the report."

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Nigeria attacked over press repression

By Nicholas von Herberstein

EVERY two weeks a journalist gets killed, and every three days a journalist gets arrested, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists. It announced yesterday that 129 journalists were jailed in 24 countries around the world and 26 killed in 1997.

The report targets Nigeria as the worst offender, which is holding more journalists than any other African country, in-

cluding prize-winning writer Christine Anyanwu. Although Turkey had released 40 journalists during the course of the year, 29 were still being detained. While the imprisonment of journalists sounds abhorrent, a fate far worse has befallen 26 journalists who have been killed in the pursuit of their profession.

Unlike a soldier who may be equipped to deal with violent situations, a journalist's weapon is the pen, though for the 26 journalists it certainly wasn't mightier

than the sword. "When journalists are murdered or brutalised, it is almost always by some government, some organisation, some criminal cartel, or some individual wanting to prevent the flow of embarrassing or incriminating information to the public," said Gene Roberts, chairman of the CPI.

"If the assassins learned that when they killed journalists, the inevitable result was that they got more coverage rather than less, the killings would subside," he added.

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Romans hurtle along tram-lines towards a chaotic millennium



Crush hour: Passengers (left) in close quarters on a No 8 tram, having queued for the dubious privilege (above). One of the villains of the piece is the Mayor of Rome, Francesco Rutelli (right), who found himself toasting an empty track last Saturday at the inauguration of the line, as it was still incomplete

Photographs: Marucci Maurizio



IT WAS supposed to be Rome's dream machine for the Millennium. Not so much a tram as a flying carpet, a high-speed, hi-tech, electronic monster that would whisk 300,000 people painlessly from their commuter suburbs to the centre.

Nothing could go wrong, they said, since the tram would have its own dedicated track and pass every two to three minutes. So confident were the city fathers that they cancelled half a dozen buses that used to ply the same route, declaring their excess to requirement. Even the traffic lights would turn green on command, thanks to some smart computer technology.

Andrew Gumbel finds the Eternal City on a one-way road to ruin with a hi-tech transport system that failed to deliver

The town planners who cooked up this scheme forgot one thing. This is Rome, a city where nothing can be taken for granted except chronic urban dysfunction. Three days into its existence, the No 8 tram from Casilotta in the western suburbs to Largo Argentina in the heart of the old city has suffered four serious breakdowns, fallen far behind its ambitious schedule, mashed pensioners, babies and invalids into an indistinguishable human pulp and provoked the beginnings of a popular revolution.

"Off with their heads!" yelled a middle-aged woman amidst the mayhem on inauguration day, directing her anger at the mayor, the head of the bus company - anybody she could think of to blame. "Don't treat us like cattle, resign!" echoed half a tramload on Tuesday, their mouths wriggling about for air above the crush like shipwreck survivors fighting to stay afloat.

It did not help that traffic around Largo Argentina has been completely redirected to allow passengers alighting from

the tram to make onward connections. The square has turned into a seething mass of angry commuters, jammed cars and buses unable to negotiate the ludicrously tight bend into which they have all been stuffed.

This disaster has been a long time coming. The tramline was supposed to have been finished for last November's mayoral elections, but got held up when the Culture Ministry insisted at the last minute that the route be surfaced with cobblestones instead of plain asphalt.

It was too late to use real cobblestones, since the tracks had already been cemented in. An exasperated Rome city council was forced to order fake cobblestone tops no more than a couple of inches thick and, when it turned out the job could not be done locally, it had to subcontract the job out to Hong Kong.

A new inauguration date was fixed for last Saturday, but the mayor, Francesco Rutelli, found himself toasting an empty track since the line was still incomplete.

When the service finally started at 6am on Monday, there were no jumbo super-trams ready (the bus company had to use old rickety ones instead) and no "smart" traffic lights, just the usual dumb ones that obstinately turned red instead of green when the tram approached.

The ticket machine at Casilotta refused to give any change, forcing honest passengers to roam the district in search of an open bar. Pedestrians paid no attention to the tram whatever, forcing drivers to slam on the

brakes and send heads crashing against the window-panes.

As a result, the journey time for the full stretch almost doubled from the projected 20 minutes to nearer 40. Time and again, the doors got so full the doors could not open and one of them gave up the ghost near the education ministry in Trastevere. "Hey Mr Mayor, give us back our buses!" they shouted as the mechanics vainly played with the emergency switches to try to kick the tram back to life. Actually, the passengers' wish has been granted.

A desperate city council has put four buses on standby on their old route down Viale Trastevere in case of delays while the bus company struggles to prise open the doors of the No 8.

None of this bodes well for the year 2000, when up to 30 million pilgrims will flood into town for the Vatican's millennial Jubilee. Apart from the super-tram, Rome has no significant infrastructural improvements to offer. A plan to build a new metro line beneath the centre fell through, as did a tunnel that would have burrowed under the Castel Sant'Angelo. Fasten your seatbelts, folks, it's going to be a humpy ride.

The kids were screaming

Why do small white boys do



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French Right anoints Blair

By John Lichfield
in Paris

TONY BLAIR is a Gaullist. This was the drift of the friendly, low-key French media reaction yesterday to the Prime Minister's speech to the National Assembly.

There was praise for Mr Blair's French, and excited comments from right-of-centre French politicians, claiming him as one of their own.

The Left was reserved, even frosty. The Socialist Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin, felt the need to quibble with Mr Blair on one point. Mr Blair told the Assembly that ideology was dead: there was no longer a left or right-wing way of running an economy, only a good way and a bad way. No, said Mr Jospin, there were still good and bad left-wing policies and good and bad right-wing policies.

Le Monde, the left-of-centre newspaper, gave Mr Blair's visit only a short story at the bottom of an inside page. The British Prime Minister had, the paper said, "got up to speak with the delighted smile of a child" discovering the light of the French Republic for the first time.

But the paper praised Mr Blair's "perfect French" and welcomed the fact that he had

given a detailed defence of Blairism, and had not mouthed the traditional empty phrases.

Le Figaro, the right-wing daily, was the only paper to put Mr Blair on the front, under the headline: "The sound advice of Tony Blair". Asked what he thought of the speech, Jean-Pierre Chevènement (radical socialist and interior minister) said in English: "I admire his French." Paul Quilès, a Socialist former defence minister, was more damning: "Usually people who announce the arrival of a new world are either naive or disturbing."

The centre-right's uproarious approval of Mr Blair's address owed something, no doubt, to a release of tension after a week of in-fighting on the French Right over local alliances with the National Front. But right-wing parliamentarians could not hide their joy yesterday at what they imagined to be the discomfiture of the Left. Pierre Leclouche, a Gaullist and right-wing thinker, said: "It was very amusing. It was a fine lesson in Thatcherism, addressed as much to the French Left as the French Right... truly, it was a delight." Patrick Devedjian, a rising star of the Gaullist RPR, said: "In English, New Labour is a bad translation. It really means RPR."

Papon trial halted by wife's death

THE JUDGE in the trial of the accused Nazi collaborator Maurice Papon yesterday adjourned the proceedings for five days following the death of the defendant's wife of 65 years. Mr Papon's lawyers said a verdict in the nearly six-month-long trial was now expected next Wednesday.

Before the delay, a verdict had been due late tomorrow. Paulette Papon, 88, died of cancer at the couple's home near Paris. Mr Papon had left Bordeaux to return home as soon as he heard the news. He was driven by car in the middle of the night under police escort.

The 88-year-old Mr Papon, who served as Paris police chief and budget minister after the Second World War, is accused of ordering the arrest for deportation of 1,560 Jews including 223 children in 1942-44 when he was secretary-general of the Bordeaux region Prefect's Office and supervisor of its Service for Jewish Questions.

Proceedings were started against him in 1981 but were obstructed by senior government officials unwilling to see their country's unsavoury wartime past dragged into the open.

— Reuters, Bordeaux

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'The kids were sitting ducks ... they were screaming to be let back inside'

David Osborne reports on the day
carnage came to an American backwater

IT WAS 12.41pm on Tuesday when the normal happy routine at the Westside Middle School, just outside Jonesboro, was first interrupted. Fire alarms sounded throughout the school. Just as they had been instructed in numerous drills, the children, aged 11 to 13, got up from their desks, and, with their teachers, filed calmly outside the school's doors and began to line up on a narrow concrete walkway outside.

It was barely a minute later when the county sheriff's office got the first call - "Guns fired at Westside School. Come at once." By then, however, the horror was already under way. Pupils and teachers were falling to the ground, blood was spilling on to the walkway and on to the manicured grass on either side. Bullets zinged into the breeze-block wall of the gym, by the walkway.

Cutting the children and teachers down was a ruthless rain of bullets, coming from wooded higher ground just 100 yards away. The source of the gunfire, according to numerous witnesses, was two boys, standing on the bluff. Dressed from head to toe in camouflage gear - the kind that so many fathers and sons wear on hunting expeditions in the surrounding countryside at weekends - they were firing Rambo-style with an array of weapons, including high-velocity rifles and handguns. With an estimated nine guns between them, the pair let off 27 shots.

The panic was instant. But, unable to digest what was happening to them, some of the children at first believed the fire drill was being turned into a film theatre event by members of the drama class. Only when the blood started to spill, did they begin to understand.

"Kids started clapping, they thought it was a play," 13-year-old April Stevens said later, "and everybody started running around". April is one of many small children still trying to grasp what happened in those seconds. And how close she herself came to being hit.

"I saw my friends go down and my teacher go down," she said. Holding her fingers just inches from her head she went on: "A bullet came right by me. It went by my car and I heard

the sound of it." One teacher, Shannon Wright, 32, at that moment committed the most heroic act of the day. Seeing that one of her pupils, Emma Pittman, was directly in the line of fire, she stood in front of the girl to shield her. Mrs Wright, believed to have been pregnant, took the bullets herself and was fatally wounded.

What Mrs Wright did to protect the girl was described by another child, Amber Vanover. "This guy was aiming at her [Emma]. He was firing to shoot her. Mrs Wright moved out in front of her. And she got shot. She died. I sat and watched her."

There was nowhere for the children to take shelter. This is a modern school, built only three years ago, and the fire-alarm system has a special feature: once the children are out of the school, all the doors automatically lock behind them. As the bullets kept coming, running back inside for sanctuary was not an option.

"The kids were sitting ducks," cried one mother, Tvylla Clevinger, who was among the first of the terrified parents to come rushing in their cars to the school. "They were screaming to people inside to open up the doors and the guns kept going off."

The scar of Tuesday's killings will remain with Jonesboro for a generation, but the act of terror itself was brief. In less than four minutes, police and paramedic teams were streaming on to the sprawling campus, which also accommodates the local high and elementary schools.

The accused boys had begun fleeing into the woods and towards a white van parked several hundred yards away. As they ran, however, they were brought to the ground by sprinting police officers. The van was found to contain more weapons.

Back at the school the pandemonium continued. Children, rushing around in confusion, unsure where to go, found themselves witnesses to scenes of gore no adult would wish to see in their lifetime. So appalling were some of the injuries, even those who tried to treat them were still unable yesterday to speak about what they saw without their voices choking. Paramedics and the surviv-



An emergency worker carrying a girl from an ambulance into Westside Middle School in Jonesboro, Arkansas, following the shooting Photograph: AP

ing teachers began herding the screaming children into the gym, the only building where the doors were unlocked. The walkway and the grassy area around it became an instant hospital unit. The dead were sorted from the injured. A few moments later the first of many ambulances arrived to ferry the wounded to St Bernard's hospital, where long-rehearsed public emergency procedures had already been activated.

By the evening when the first of the media satellite lorries began swarming into the area, the awfulness of the afternoon was already being tidied away. As police officials measured and tagged bullet holes in the wall of the gym, weeping school staff laboured with bleach and mops to remove the bloodstains from the walkway.

As darkness came, the first tributes to the dead began to arrive, bouquets of flowers, giant white ribbons and smaller ribbons and pins that by yesterday all of Jonesboro was wearing in mourning on dresses and jacket lapels.

Why do small-town white boys do this?

Mary Dejevsky in Washington tries to find a reason behind America's latest massacre

IS IT GUNS? Is it television? Is it America? Is it getting worse? Within hours of Tuesday's school shootings at Jonesboro in Arkansas the psychologists and sociologists were all trying to explain why two boys, one 11, one 13, might have dressed themselves in camouflage gear, armed themselves with a handgun and a rifle apiece, and set out to shoot their schoolmates. It was the third multiple shooting at a United States school in six months.

These shootings do not fit the common preconception of violence in America. They did not happen in the often violent inner-city schools but in relatively small towns in the backwoods: in central Mississippi, in south-western Kentucky, and now in northern Arkansas. Although much violence in America is concentrated among blacks, these schools are predominantly white. As for those who think they illustrate a trend of increasing juvenile violence in the US, they are wrong: juvenile crime has started to fall in the last two years.

Nor are American schools necessarily violent. According to a study released last week, the incidence of violence in schools has changed little over 20 years.



Medics rest after helping Jonesboro victims Photograph: AP

Even excluding these explanations, the three school shootings have enough in common to give analysts material to work on. Noting that all the recent shootings took place in southern states, one Arkansas academic blamed "Southern culture" where guns were a fact of life, the right to carry arms was strongly defended and on public display, hunting was a common pastime, and children had easy access to weapons.

Others blamed lax parental discipline which gave children the idea they could settle disputes violently, and yet others lamented what they saw as stifling peer pressure in schools where 10- and 11-year olds are already dating and, as apparently in this case, wreaking vengeance for favours spurned.

And while juvenile crime may be falling, the level of violent crime among juveniles has risen. A New York psychologist said: "Now kids have access to money, drugs, alcohol and

weapons. Things have changed, and they have the opportunities to do these horrible things."

Surprisingly, perhaps, the standard explanation after such multiple shootings - that the young perpetrators were inordinately influenced by films, television or violent videogames - has been heard less than on previous occasions. Although many American parents seem concerned to the point of paranoia that their children should be sheltered from violence and sex on television or the Internet, there is growing recognition that second-hand violence does not automatically foster violent behaviour.

Several experts noted that the perpetrators in all three recent shootings seemed to be loners, with some latent predisposition to violence or past problems in schoolwork and socialising.

"Normal kids," said one yesterday, "don't do this."

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CATALOGUE OF DEATH

KIGALI — President Bill Clinton said yesterday that he would ask the Attorney General, Janet Reno, to investigate the problem of school shootings.

"I do think we've reached the point where we have to analyse these incidents to see whether or not we can learn anything [and] what we can do to prevent further ones," said Mr Clinton, who is on a 12-day tour of Africa.

The Jonesboro shooting was the third fatal shooting rampage in a school in the past five months.

On 1 December, a boy opened fire on a student prayer circle at a high school in West Paducah, Kentucky, killing three students and wounding five. A 14-year-old student, described as small and emotionally immature, was arrested.

Two months earlier, a 16-year-old outcast in Pearl, Mississippi, was accused of killing his mother, then going to school and shooting nine students. Two of them died, including the boy's former girlfriend. Authorities later charged six friends with conspiracy, saying the suspects were part of a group that dabbled in Satanism.

The President said in Kigali that he wanted Reno to find "whatever experts there are in our country" on this sort of violence to see how it may be prevented.

SILENCERS 

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... world failed
... victims



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صكنا من الامم



Top of the world: Himalayan peaks including Everest in a scene from David Breashears' documentary, Everest. The film was made in the Imax format in May 1996 when 10 people died on the mountain. Photograph: Robert Schauer

Sent to the mountain with garlands and blessings

KATHMANDU — Mountain guide Dave Walsh is smiling again. "I've just found the instructions for the tent—they're in Italian." In the sun-filled yard of a Kathmandu hotel, loads are being prepared and equipment checked ready for despatch to Everest Base Camp.

To those unfamiliar with the Himalayan expedition scene, like myself, it looks like frantic chaos. A Nepali is busy stitching tent material on a treadle sewing machine; Kit Spencer, the expedition's agent in the Nepalese capital, is demonstrating the safety harnesses to be worn by porters high on the mountain and scores of barrels are being lined up ready for packing.

Meanwhile, there's been a hitch on the bureaucracy front. The satellite phone which will keep us in touch with home for the next 10 weeks needs a



STEPHEN GOODWIN

Everest Diary Day One

licence. So, at this late hour, it has had to be handed over to the "ministry" which gets the paperwork in order. Dave's deputy guide, "Barney" Barnicott, summed it up while checking the fit of a client's crampons. "It's going to be a monster day," he said before rushing off to deliver the phone to the bureaucrats.

Despite all this, both guides are confident that the show will be on the road—or rather in the air—on time in the morning

when we—Himalayan Kingdoms Expeditions (South Col) team—are due to make the 45-minute flight to Lukla and begin the long walk to Everest Base Camp.

The team is made up of three guides and seven climbers who have each paid up in £30,000 for the chance to climb to the highest point in the world.

It is an international group—five Brits, including myself, three Americans, a Canadian and an Irish woman. All from different backgrounds and with varied mountaineering experience, we are just beginning to get to know each other. Conversation is light, if slightly probing. It seems a friendly bunch, which augurs well, but it will be important to bond the team before it meets the testing conditions on Everest. We have also been joined by another Canadian who will trek with us as far as Base Camp—

itself no mean feat since the camp lies at a higher altitude than Mont Blanc. Thankfully, we will be lightly loaded. Much of today has been spent packing gear into those 60-litre blue plastic barrels. The expedition has 40 of them, most of which will be carried to Base Camp on *dzhos*, a hybrid yak. Each hairy beast will be loaded with two barrels.

Shortly after our arrival at the appropriately named Sum-

mit Hotel in Kathmandu, we were invited to a *puya*, a blessing ceremony which is intended to bring good fortune to the expedition. Rust-red *ulka* was daubed on our foreheads and a garland of yellow and red flowers hung round our necks. We drank tiny bowls of *rakshi*, a strong-tasting rice wine, and ate saffron coloured eggs, *mr phuls*.

Similar blessings will be bestowed on our approach to the mountain. Perhaps it is a ceremony that cannot be repeated too often. Even by our proposed route via the South Col, the most popular way up the mountain, climbing into the thin air of Everest remains a hazardous business.

When I was buying high-altitude gear a couple of weeks ago at Outside, a specialist shop in Hathersage, Derbyshire, the assistant Andy Kirkpatrick remarked that "Climbing Everest is like hill walking, only..." Then he tailed off. Only what? Only bigger, or perhaps "only more deadly".

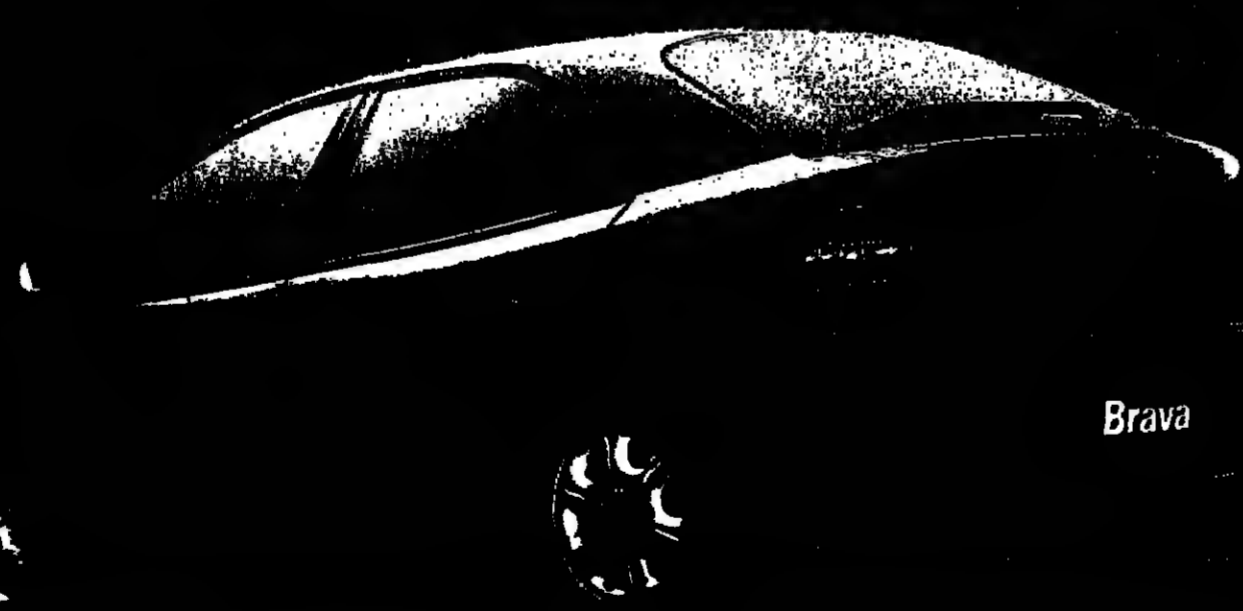
However we won't have to wait until the mountain for some scary stuff. That begins with the flight to Lukla. This story airport is little more than an inclined terrace on the hillside, making landing or take-off at Lukla one of the most terrifying experiences in passenger aviation. I can't wait.

Steve Goodwin's next report will be tomorrow

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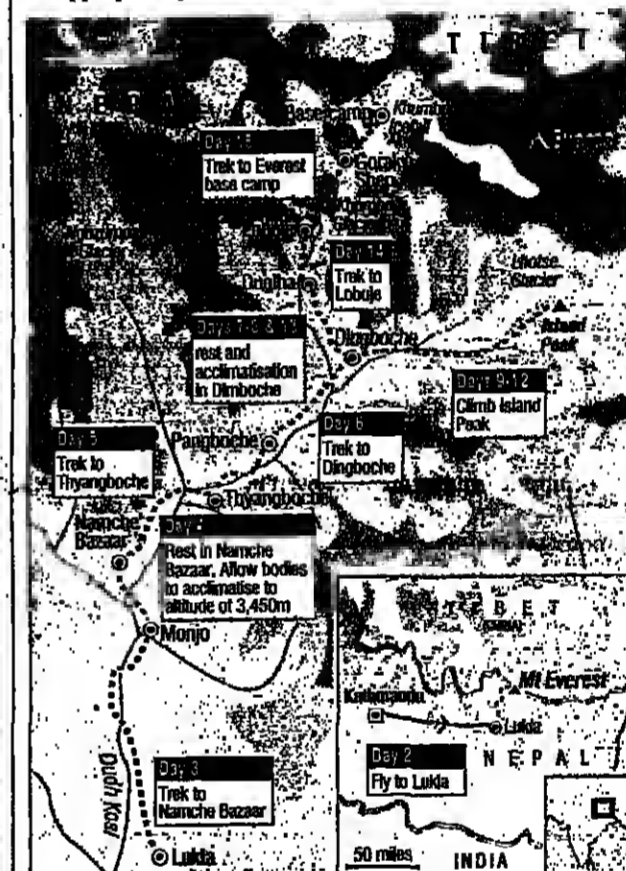
The Times adds, "Nor are the eye-catching looks confined to the outside." (THE TIMES 17/5/97.)

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King conspiracy 'evidence'

CORETTA Scott King, the widow of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr, wants an investigation into possible new evidence that her husband's assassination was part of a conspiracy. A former FBI agent said yesterday he has papers that could help verify claims by James Earl Ray that a gunman named Raoul set him up to take the blame for killing King in 1968. Donald Wilson said yesterday he took papers from Ray's car when he impounded it after King was killed. Ray pleaded guilty to killing King in 1969 and was sentenced to 99 years in prison, but later recanted and has been seeking a trial ever since. — AP, Atlanta

Legendary boast

BULGARIA'S former Communist strongman Todor Zhivkov compared himself to a legendary national hero yesterday and said that if he decides to get back into politics again, "nothing can stop me". Mr Zhivkov, 86, ruled Bulgaria from 1954-89. "They [the people] are looking for a strong leader again like Krali Marko" — a mythical warrior revered for fighting Turkish invaders centuries ago. — AP, Sofia

German gun haul

GERMAN police confiscated machine guns, rifles and over 8,000 rounds of ammunition yesterday in a raid of right-wing extremists. — AP, Katerslautern

South Korean attraction

COUNCILLORS in Kangnung, east of Seoul, planned to start building a museum today to display as a tourist attraction a North Korean submarine which ran aground in the area in September 1976. — AP, Seoul

Pilgrims arrive at Mecca

ABOUT 600,000 Muslims so far have arrived in Saudi Arabia to perform the annual hajj at Islam's two holiest sites in Mecca and Medina. The pilgrimage will reach a climax in the first week of April. — Reuters, Dubai

Help for dancing bears

THE World Society for the Protection of Animals is asking tourists to help stamp out the practice of turning bears into dancing attractions in India by refusing to give money to the bears' owners. — AP, New Delhi

Pardon for lesbian

A WOMAN jailed for two years for "tempting a woman for having sexual relations" was released yesterday after receiving a presidential pardon. Mariana Cetinar was convicted in 1996 and sentenced to three years in prison. — AP, Bucharest

مكتبة من الامم

The curtain comes down on Labour's end of pier show

The party's national executive has decided to abandon kiss-me-quickville, but Blackpool is 'real' and its heartbeat is old Labour, says Paul Routledge

OH NO! Labour is saying goodbye to Blackpool, the only genuine seaside resort left (excepting Scarborough). In a fit of middle-class pique, the party's national executive has decided to abandon kiss-me-quickville in favour of fashionable Brighton or boring Bournemouth. Chic Blackpool ain't, but it is the real thing. People who actually work for a living, and those who just wish they could go there in their millions every year, and have a damn good time. As my dear departed friend, Bill Martin, of the *News of the World*, once defined the place, it is Candy Floss and Torn Knickers. New Labour just wouldn't understand that.

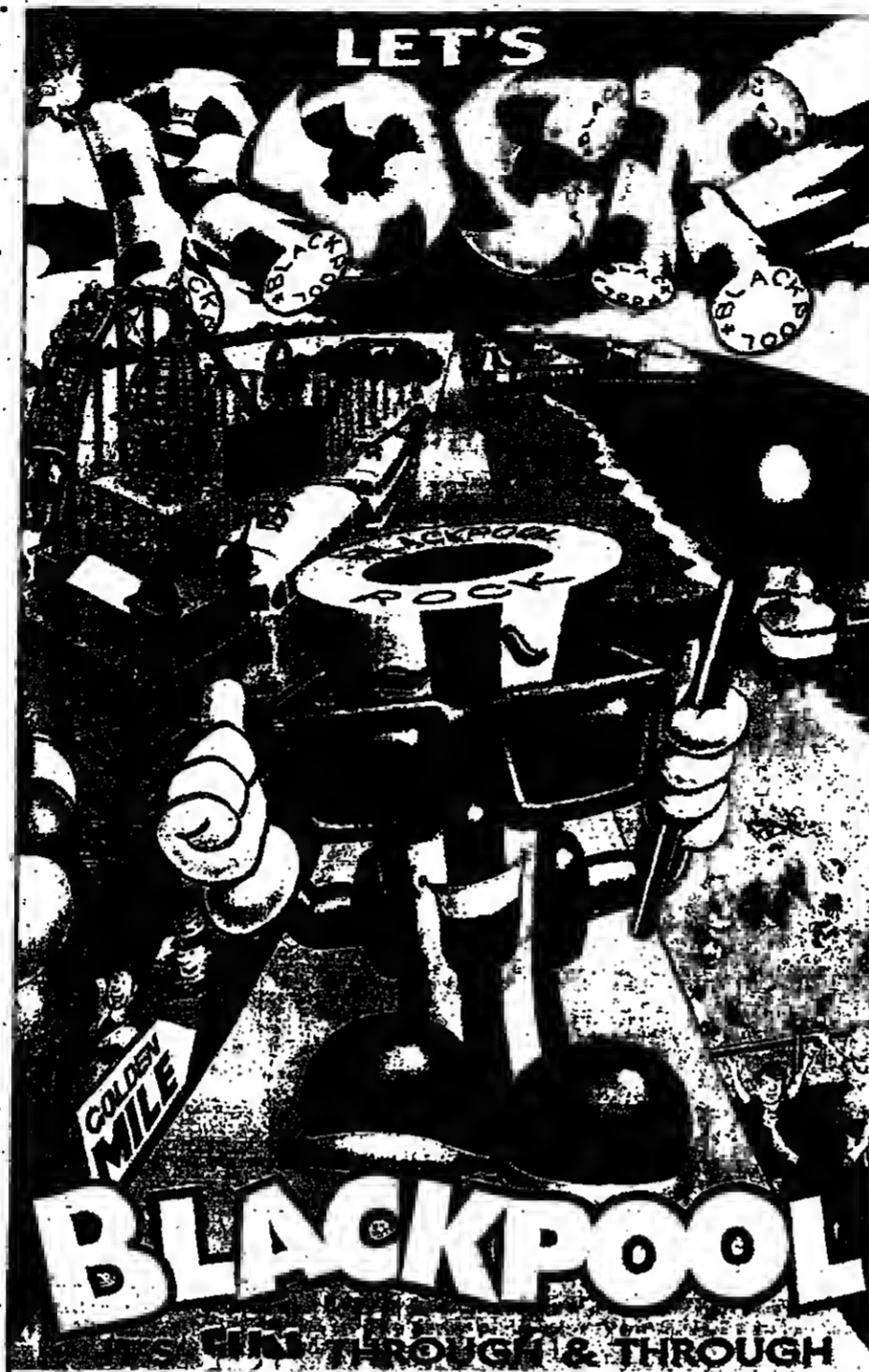
I have been going to Blackpool for Labour conferences for 30 years, and though it changes, the resort's great virtue is that it stays the same. The Winter Gardens are a Victorian delight, brightly-coloured tiles and millions of lights like an indoor illumination to match the proper one on the seafloor. And those dingy, cavernous bars! You can make your hungover way into these places at eleven in the morning, thinking a quiet snort will revive your spirits, only to find the brothers have already beat you to it. In the further corner will be a craggy-faced trade unionist from from Clydeside, taking a hauf 'o' hauf, and explaining the mysteries of composing motions to an adoring first-time delegate he met at the engineering workers' "function" the night before. There's nothing like that in Brighton or Bournemouth. More likely, you will be dragged into a focus group to explain how wonderful the great leader is.

Of course, the journey is half the fun. The south coast resorts are too close to get a good session going on the train, but many a policy has been made or broken on the long grid from Euston to Preston. The

train is always late, but as you approach Blackpool, through stations in the Fylde with names like Kirkham and Wesham, the first sight of the famous tower stirs old sentiments. Back again! Today, it will be gossip, gossip, gossip in the ample lobby of the Imperial Hotel, properly studied with comfortable chairs, where many a late night sing-song has ended with the police being called. Tonight, it will be a *rencontre* with Dr Thwaites' Restorative in the seedy Empress, where Tony Blair (when he was nobbut employment spokesman) was notoriously invited to mate elsewhere by those rough boys, the industrial correspondents of the national press.

For Blackpool is nothing if not ruthlessly egalitarian. Where else can you be called a cheeky bugger by a waitress half your age over breakfast in your hotel? And speaking of hotels, grasping though they are, the hoteliers are discretion itself, as long as you don't make too much noise. Past Labour conferences have been adultery on wheels. In Blackpool, it's surprising the sheets don't snap in half when the chambermaid makes the bed. New Labour's morality inspectors have obviously been at work in this week's deplorable decision. Even the hookers have a sense of humour. One journalist fast asleep in the Imperial was awoken by the noise of a lady of the night clambering into his second-floor bedroom from the outside fire escape. He remonstrated a little, so she threw his shoes out of the window.

And it isn't true that there is nowhere to eat. As well as having the finest fish and chips outside Yorkshire, Blackpool has some very good restaurants. Nothing on the south coast remotely compares with Robert's Oyster Bar, with plain wooden seats, magnificent views of the North Pier and the Irish Sea and wonderful sea



food. It is also the only decent BYO eatery this side of Australia. You buy your crate of chardonnay round the corner and quaff it over a long lunch with a couple of MPs and the delegate from Frome.

Brighton doesn't have trams. It doesn't have Tedley's or Boddingtons. It doesn't have a tower, or a pleasure beach, or mucky postcards, or a decent Trades and Labour Club.

Bournemouth has too many hills, and not enough pubs. The conference centres at both are soul-destroying concrete boxes. You know you are only there so they can take your money.

The politics in Blackpool are live. It's heartbeat is old Labour. I've a bloody good mind to go there during conference week, and watch it on the telly.

At best it's a museum of working-class taste and hasn't bothered to change since the Fifties – even the chip fat is the same, says David Walker

OBAN may be darker, Rothesay wetter, Bournemouth dearer, Torquay harder to get to – and in Eastbourne the geriatric count is certainly higher – but among seaside towns Blackpool takes the biscuit as the all-round worst place to come, visit or confer.

And in Blackpool's case, it's a Garibaldi – stale, anachronistic and fly-blown. Cool Britannia, it isn't. It's not even attractive in a masochistic, *nostalgie de la boue* sense.

At best, it's a museum of working class taste. Here is a resort which acquired an identity in the days when a mill-hand from Oldham could have a paddle, drink six pints of Banks's, have a piddle, eat fish and chips and still have change from half a crown. It has not bothered to update since – even the chip fat is the same. Only the prices have changed. Blackpool traders always were great gougers.

You don't have to be Richard Hoggart to notice that if, once, Blackpool's vulgarity was urgent, and its pleasures of people with all too little leisure, nowadays it floats in a cultural no-man's land of plastic tat, entertainment that is second-rate even by the standards of day-time television, and catering which does not seem to have registered the arrival on these shores of McDonald's.

To be anti-Blackpool is not to be anti-North. Scarborough is a fine resort, with a dram-

atic setting, fresh sea food and bracing air. Even poor old Morecambe can boast of more – that magnificent marooned ship of the Midland Hotel, those magical sunset views across to the Lakeland peaks.

To be anti-Blackpool is not even to regret – as Nye Bevan used to regret – the poverty of working-class imagination. Working people have, since the late Fifties, travelled abroad, and come to expect professional standards. But when they come to the Fylde coast expectations seem to sink to zero.

The problems start on the front. Rough or smooth, the Irish Sea at Blackpool is always turbid. Beneath the murky float unspeakable things. Blackpool does not have sand or mud, but something cloying, shifting and indefinitely else.

Along the front stretch, for those interminable miles between Lytham and Fleetwood, like the repeating pattern on the wallpaper which Blackpool landlords all seem to buy from the same stockist, the same shopping parades of chip shop, burger bar, amusement arcade and discount retailer, lit by "illuminations" swinging wildly in the October gales.

The famed trams creak their way past barely a single memorable building – beyond the tower and the Winter Gardens themselves (and Labour is right, they are too small for a modern conference). Blackpool sprawls, a huge urban mass, where the rules on town and country plan-

ning seem somehow to have been suspended. Houses seem either makeshift, unpainted or ineffably chintzy.

After a day on the prom, visitors retire to bedrooms which were last decorated in 1959. Nylon counterpanes sit on nylon sheets. As the watery light filters in through nylon curtains, you rise as the smell of bacon fat wafts through the corridors. Yoghurt and muesli are not on the breakfast menu.

As for the conventioners, the fact is Blackpool rarely even recognises there is a big, sophisticated world out there, beyond hiking prices to metropolitan levels for party conference week. The Tories never dared complain – in public at least – for fear of seeming snobbish. But the blunt fact is that even in those hotels which charge as if they merited three or four stars, standards are poor. Blackpool is the kind of place where to order the International Herald Tribune is to be greeted with a blank face; where the telecommunications revolution (requiring space for laptop in hotel rooms let alone a few extra telephone sockets) has not happened; where waiters seem always in the work experience youths who have learnt the completely unnecessary art of wrapping a napkin round a wine bottle, but cannot serve a Dover sole to save their lives.

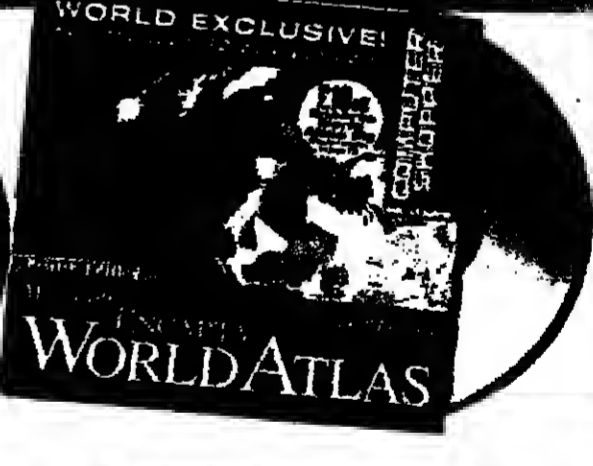
And all they say about the difficulties of getting there are true. By road, the M6/M56 junction is often impassable. By rail the journey involves huddling at Preston into a two-coach diesel which always seems overheated and seems to take an age to get past Poulton.

If Tony Blair is serious about remaking party allegiance in Britain, let alone remaking Britain, he could hardly do anything of greater symbolic importance than decamping from Blackpool.

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Blackpool: a user's guide

■ The Labour Party conference brings £5m to the town. Each year Blackpool hosts 400 other conferences which bring in a further £50m.

■ There are 3,000 hotels, guest houses and self-catering establishments which can sleep 100,000 guests in any one night – almost doubling its resident population of 150,000.

■ The most popular tourist attraction in Britain is the Blackpool Pleasure Beach with 7.5 million visitors a year.

■ The beach is home to the tallest, fastest and steepest roller coaster in the world. At 235ft high the 'Pepsi Max Big One' reaches speeds of 85mph during a two-minute trip which puts riders through a 3.5 positive G-Force.

■ The Blackpool Tower, which cost £70,000 to build, opened in 1894, stands at 518ft 9in. It attracts 1 million visitors a year. It is lit with 10,000 bulbs.

■ The Blackpool illuminations light up a six-mile stretch of the coast with 500,000 bulbs costing the town £1.5m a year to run.

■ 10.5 million sticks of rock are sold each year.

—Michael Greenwood

Spies left out in the cold

The Iron Curtain is gone, but the trade in secrets is flourishing as never before. Nicholas von Herberstein explores the twilight world of modern espionage

WHEN five Russian spies were caught in Norway just a few weeks ago, it took plenty of people, not least the country's prime minister by surprise. Surely, said premier Kjell Magne Bondevik, this sort of co-duct no longer took place in 1998 in a democratised Russia? Wrong. The notion that espionage is on the brink of extinction is naïve to say the least. Despite the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, the spy trade has not faded into obscurity. The reality is that the industry is as active as ever, with billions of pounds being funnelled into the budgets of various agencies around the world.

Just how active spies still are has been made apparent in recent weeks with a series of embarrassing blunders. The worst case involved Mossad, the Israeli intelligence service. Once regarded as the élite of the spy clubs, feared by its enemies, it was responsible for two bungled assassination attempts, one in Jordan and one in Switzerland, which have led to the resignation of Danny Yatom, the head of Mossad, and the blushes of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government.

The Russian spy ring in Norway was uncovered as the five members of FSW (formerly the KGB) attempted to get their hands on top secret Nato and Norwegian documents. Norway is the only Nato member state that borders Russia, and the region is home to Russia's vast northern fleet, yet despite an "era of mutual co-operation and understanding between Russia and Nato", some organisations, it seems, have not received the message.

According to Dr Ken Robertson, lecturer in terrorism and intelligence at the University of Reading, a crucial factor (certainly in the case of Mossad) which contributes to these failed operations, is a lack of clarity. "Where the organisation does not have a clarity of purpose, and is not agreed on what kind of security is necessary for the state, for instance, if they are divided over the peace process, then that can make the whole organisation very factional. Organisations that are characterised by factions on the whole are less effective," he says.

"The most damaging aspect to Mossad is was this myth of its near invincibility," says Dr Robertson. "With that myth destroyed, Mossad will find top-level recruitment a little more difficult."

The Russian security apparatus certainly can't be described as having a clarity of purpose.

So swift are the changes in its leadership that today's head of foreign intelligence is tomorrow's best-selling author on the £10,000-an-hour lecture tour.

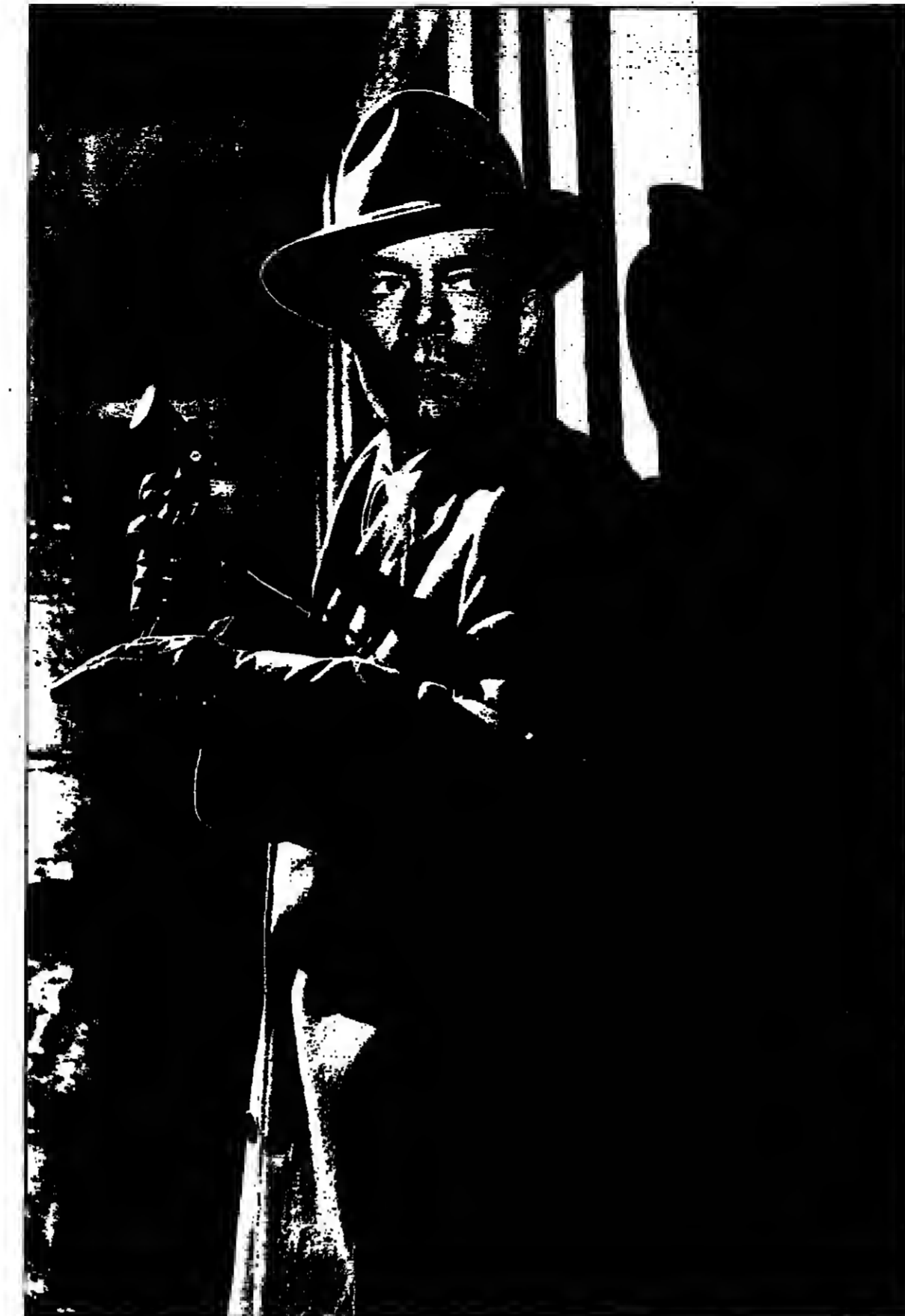
There is, it seems, an odour of incompetence amongst the agencies that gives credence to Hollywood portrayals. Stumbling around in the dark, they fight budget restrictions from their own governments, get blamed for failures by those same governments, face an ever-increasing sophistication and technological evolution in their opponents, and receive no recognition for the missions that succeed.

Britain does not escape unscathed from humiliating incidents either. Last year MI5 held a very public recruitment drive, with advertisements for staff placed in the national press for the first time. It led to thousands of applications to a phone line. Phone hackers, or "phreakers" broke into the line with a new message indicating the demise of MI5. "Hello, my name is Colonel Botch. I am calling on behalf of the KGB. We have taken over MI5 because they are not secret any more and they are a crap organisation. All the details left will be forwarded to the KGB. Thank you."

(In fact, the quality of the candidates was, to a large extent, not high enough to justify the man-hours involved in wading through the applications).

Despite the recruitment drive, British intelligence, like the secret services of many other western countries, has suffered from budget constraints following the end of the Cold War. Its funds are dispersed between MI5, MI6, and GCHQ. Those holding the purse-strings clearly did see a valid reason for cutting funds, although the cuts have not been limited to the extent one might have thought possible. But what many observers believe is that the cuts have led to bungling – as witnessed by recent events.

The end of the Cold War has also led to a change in *modus operandi* as well. With the collapse of the former Soviet Union, the situation has become so confused that reliable intelligence information is only possible by getting people on the ground to report back, rather than using satellites or other forms of technology. The countries involved in espionage have also changed. A recently released document by the United States National Counter Intelligence Centre reveals that, overall, activities have increased. "A number of countries pose various levels of threat to US information. Some are traditional adversaries,



Out of the shadows: Hollywood's portrayal of the spying game is not too wide of the mark

Photograph: Kobal

while others are long-time allies of the United States, or have traditionally been neutral," the report stated.

Louis Freeh, the director of the FBI, has told the United States Senate that at least 23 foreign intelligence services were actively targeting the United States. "I think that Russian aggression has been unabated even in the post-Cold War. It is escalating. It's a serious and continuing problem. Recent espionage cases involving Russia, South Korea and China are just the tip of a large and dangerous intelligence iceberg."

The area of responsibility for spies has also changed markedly since the end of the Cold War. International crime and terrorism, money-laundering and nuclear proliferation occupy the time of agencies

far more than mere military and intelligence data acquisition.

However, a far more serious threat than the traditional espionage activities is the sudden rise in economic espionage by foreign governments. The CIA director, George J Tenet, outlined five key challenges facing the intelligence communities to the US Senate select sub-committee on Intelligence. "At the top of the list I place a set of trans-national issues that threaten the lives of all, while also threatening strategic interests in important ways. These issues include proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, international terrorism, drug-trafficking, information warfare and the fallout from the recent Asian financial crisis."

Indeed, two weeks ago, the FBI called for an increase of \$93m for its computer crime unit, with a total budget increase for the fiscal year 1999 of \$3bn.

"We do see an increase in foreign economic espionage due to an increasing reliance on technology and commerce, as well as the value of intellectual property," said Lesley Wiser, head of overseas espionage in the Eurasian sector of the FBI Counter-Intelligence Division. "One of our priorities here at the FBI is to identify economic intelligence activities of foreign governments in the United States and to neutralise those activities," she said. "We are spycatchers, and economic security has become part of the National Security Agenda."

Stars' children pay the high price of fame

PITY Sir John Hall, the reluctant returning chairman at Newcastle United, back on the board at St James' Park after the Toon-gate scandal toppled his son Douglas. Douglas Hall and Freddie Shepherd finally jumped from their posts as chairman and vice-chairman before they were pushed by several thousand irate Geordies following revelations of their cocaine exploits with Spanish prostitutes and boasts of ripping off fans.

Sir John is not the only famous daddy to be experiencing a reverse of the old adage "the sins of the father will be visited on the son." As actor Dustin Hoffman parted at the Oscars in Los Angeles this week, his 32-year-old step-daughter Karina faced imprisonment in a British prison for stealing cheques worth £5,358 from the Cambridge company where she worked. In mitigation the court was told Karina had always felt intimidated by her father's wealth and fame.

The list of self-destructive, wild-child offspring of celebrities is a long one. From the death by heroin overdose of Olivia Chan-non, daughter of the former Tory minister Paul, to the suicide of actor Paul Newman's son Allan, life as the child of a superstar would appear to be a curse rather than a blessing.

Professor Petriska Clarkson, a consultant psychologist and author specialising in the study of fame, says behind the glamour the children of celebrities often have a rough deal. "They are constantly on display and never really seen for who they are," she said. "Other children will say: 'you're so and so's child,' and from that moment they cannot take any of their human relationships for granted. The child will find it very difficult to know whether people really like them or if they are just trying to get some reflected glory and get close to the famous parent."

Dirk Flower, a Harley Street psychologist who treats children of the rich and famous, said they respond to their parents' fame in one of three ways: rebellion, abuse of their parent's position a la Hall, or success – Stella McCartney for example.

Too often or not though the path is rebellion – experiments with drink and drugs, unhappiness and even death. The ultimate example is the Brando family. In 1990 Marlon Brando's son Christian was sentenced to 10 years for killing the lover of his pregnant half-sister Cheyenne. Cheyenne's baby was born a drug addict and she never recovered from the trauma, committing suicide three years later at the age of 25.

Professor Clarkson says the high instances of suicide and the numbers of drug and alcohol addicts among celebrity offspring are a result of the child's inability to deal with their parent's fame. "They can't be bothered to engage anymore so they give up or become drug addicts."

The pattern is an old one. In 1957 Sarah Churchill, daughter of ex-Prime Minister Winston, was arrested in Los Angeles on a charge of drunkenness and fined \$50.

When the children of celebrities do err, the world is quick to hear of it. Professor Clarkson asks for sympathy: "I would ask that people be gentle with them, because everyone has made mistakes."

Rosa Prince

Get on with your life – don't dwell on the past



VIRGINIA
IRONSIDE

An anonymous woman is worried that despite the fact that when she was 14 her brother often came into her room and had sex with her, and that her uncle was a dirty old man who tickled her in unpleasant places, she has a wonderful marriage, sex life and children. Will these past events come back to haunt her later?

IT'S COMMONLY assumed that anyone who has been groped or flashed at in childhood has been abused and that suddenly, in later life, they'll be haunted by dark dreams, overwhelming depression and a feeling of disgust and low self-worth. This will continue until they face the original trauma, re-experience the feeling of powerlessness and resultant anger, when they can then start to rebuild their lives. The view has become so strong that now people like the anonymous woman who wrote to me can actually become anxious if she doesn't feel deep shame, guilt and horror at what has happened. Is she repressed? Worse, is she living in (ghastly word) denial? Or is she simply insensitive to life's horrors, nothing more than a cold fish? Or perhaps she is an exceptional woman, a woman of a hugely strong character who has somehow managed to deal with a dreadful event, whatever "dealing with it" might mean. My feeling is that she is none

of these things. She is just an ordinary woman with as much resilience as most of us, who has, again like most of us, been through a few mildly unpleasant experiences in her teens, and thought nothing more about them.

Child sexual abuse, if it is violent or penetrative or non-consensual, can sometimes have frightful effects in later life. Not always, but often. But most children are exposed to a variety of fiddling and groping by men as they grow up, and think no more of it than a slight wave of fear and revulsion.

I was hugged and kissed by a horrible old *Evening Standard* salesman when I was about eight. My father threatened to throw a bucket of water over him. The fact that my father never actually even had words with the man was far more unsettling to me than the unpleasant grab in itself. Creepy men used to follow me when I walked back from school and one friend of my parents used to take me out to tea and un-

der the table at Fortnum & Mason would guide my hand up his thigh and on to his crotch. I never said anything and although I used to rather dread this part of the tea I used to enjoy his talk and the cakes enough to be willing to go along with it for a few months at least. I certainly can't feel that, compared to all the other ghastly incidents that we all have in our lives, these were more than mere annoying blips.

If I were the woman who wrote to me I would put my worries aside completely. Her brother felt sexy; she didn't mind going along with it; he never threatened her or told her it was their little secret, there is no more nor less to this incident than that.

She's lucky, she's happy, and she's utterly, utterly normal. WHAT READERS SAY

Gropers and flashers were childhood occurrences that didn't upset me unduly then or now. I feel embarrassed when I think what went on with my older brothers (although we stopped short of intercourse) but I put it to the back of my mind and can face them very politely when we meet.

I don't think this will catch up with you or me – we are lucky enough to be resilient, to have a busy, happy family life and to have been able to grow up from it without melodramatic interventions. —Anon

From what you tell us (and we do not have enough details to be certain), although you and your brother broke society's rules, it seems that what he did was loving and tender and it does not sound as if it was either exploitative or degrading.

I read your letter and was, frankly, profoundly envious.

When I was a teenager my brother never even touched me. Instead he exuded self-righteous, evangelical piety, and having failed to convert me to his religion, shunned my company.

I felt dreadfully abandoned and let down, all the more so because my father was hopelessly neglectful and unaffectionate. He was also very adept at using my desperate, embarrassed desire for love to get me to do all manner of things that no father should ever ask of his daughter, although sex was out of the question. I dealt with my misery through anorexia and then bulimia, which dominated my life from the ages of 14 to 28. I was so hungry for love and affection that I let men abuse me, not daring to hope for anything better.

The proof of the pudding is surely in the eating. You are apparently a fully functioning, happy adult. At 35 I have a history of unhappy relationships, no marriage, no children, and am only just beginning to make something of my abilities at work. To the tabloids you would

be "a victim of abuse" and I would have had "the slimmer's disease". This simplistic labelling is not only patronising, it is inaccurate and misleading. —Anon

The hardest thing you have to face is that what happened to you was wrong, not of you, but of those who exploited you and who led your brother to do so. You have taken the biggest step, in recognising that what happened in your family is not acceptable. It has harmed you, even if only by making you think that it was okay. Now you need to see that this kind of behaviour repeats itself, from generation to generation.

Your brother is now your children's uncle. Can you protect them from a repeat of your own uncle's behaviour to you? Perhaps your brother has realised that what went on at home was actually abusive, and worries, as you do. If so, he could be your ally. If not, he is a danger to your children. They may never forgive you, if you fail them. —Sara Clarke

NEXT WEEK'S DILEMMA

Dear Virginia, My mother of fifty three has been diagnosed as having cancer. I have talked to the doctor privately and he says she only has between three months and eighteen months to live, but he thinks it is best not to tell her this as he feels she will lose the will to fight. Has anyone else been in

this situation? I feel my mother should be told the truth, even though she is not a very strong character and has a tendency to depression. I hate to feel I am deceiving her. —Nina

Letters are welcome, and everyone who has a suggestion quoted will be sent a bouquet.

from Interflora. Send comments and suggestions to Virginia Ironside at the Features Department, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL (fax: 0171-293 2182), by Tuesday morning. If you have a dilemma of your own that you would like to share, please let me know.

Can a better diet prevent cancer?

To find out more about our special report, Making Cancer History on Wednesday, visit The EYE

THE INDEPENDENT

cancer research campaign

مكتبة الامم المتحدة

Stars' children
pay the high
price of fame



Restoration piece: 24-carat-gold angels (above), their hands turned down to renounce worldly vanities, inside the Albert Memorial (above right) Tom Pilton/English Heritage

Albert returns in all his glory

PRINCE Albert has languished in a black bin liner since 1990 when the scaffolding went up on Kensington's Albert Memorial. The first to get a sneak preview of the restoration work will be Chancellor Kohl of Germany during the ASEC Summit for European and Asian Heads of State. He's in for a big surprise.

Queen Victoria's beloved husband, two and half times taller than life size, is gold

in true Gothic revival style. John Foley's statue of Albert depicts him in his Knight of the Garter outfit, with pantaloons and ruffles. His forefinger marks a page in the catalogue of the Great Exhibition of 1851 which Albert inspired. The money raised was spent on the nearby South Kensington museums.

Restoration work only began in earnest in 1994 when English Heritage chairman Jocelyn Stevens became involved, thundering that it was scandalous to let go to ruin such a "gloriously extrovert piece of sculpture".

English Heritage committed £2 million towards the restoration, and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport £8.2m. Ready a year ahead of schedule, the project has come in nearly £3m under budget at £11.2m, with £750,000 sponsorship already in the bag and a further £250,000 sought.

A combination of time and London's dirt served Albert badly. Lead wrapped around the over-engineered cast iron structure, caused it to corrode dramatically. Fine craftsmanship has been helped by new technology to restore it. The waterless sponge jet system, pioneered for the nuclear power stations, was used on the iron, and the first laser cleaner installed in this country for the lead.

Restored to its former glory, Gilbert Scott's Gormondghast fantasy and Prince Albert's pragmatism in patronage are in step with the spirit of our times. Chancellor Kohl would call it "zeitgeist".

Nonie Niesewand

plated once again, while the blown glass cabochons in ruby and turquoise on the orb and cross atop the monument sparkle in the sunshine.

The memorial to Albert, who died young of typhoid in 1861, is, as English Heritage project manager Alasdair Glass put it, "the British equivalent of the Taj Mahal, a love story in Portland stone and iron".

Gilbert Scott designed the shrine to the Prince Consort like a tiered wedding cake, spired to nearly 200 feet, and vaulted with flying buttresses

The office — it's a place to relax

Arthur Andersen's sixth floor offers a glimpse of how tomorrow's workspaces will be designed. Meg Carter reports

THE NINETEIES have seen a virtual revolution in office design. Information technology has enabled a radical re-think, with forward-looking organisations turning their backs on personal desk space in favour of more flexible working environments. Early adopters of this new credo were London-based creative businesses: advertising agencies, design consultancies and the odd PR company. Now, the ripples are spreading further afield — among the latest converts is management consultants Arthur Andersen.

At first glance, Arthur Andersen's central London head office at 180 The Strand is, to say the least, underwhelming. A concrete office block, the building houses some 3,000 employees across up to nine floors in five connected blocks. Built in the mid-Seventies, it has been fitted out by the firm in bristly efficient (if drab) light wood and pastel shades. A traditional cellular structure means that numerous small, self-contained offices ring the building's exterior, while lines of window-less cubicles and load-bearing columns run down the centre of each floor.

Visit the sixth floor offices of Arthur Andersen's Business Consulting division, however, and prepare for the shock of the new. The floor has been gutted and an imaginative work environment introduced, complete with "Chaos" (action), "Zen" (quiet) and "Touchdown" (temporary working) zones, flashes of bright colour and free-standing illustrated panels. A coffee bar and other new meeting areas have been fitted with novel design features, not only to intrigue but to cater for the latest multimedia technology. Oh, and there is a liberal scattering of fish tanks.

The redesign was inspired by the changing nature of the company, explains Christi Franchie, director of organisational learning and exchange for Andersen's business consulting

division. "It is a physical manifestation of where we are going in business," she says. "It is specifically designed to get different people in different teams collaborating — to foster new and more creative relationships by positioning people around each other."

Out have gone intimidating boardrooms in favour of intimate "conversation areas" to overcome "the negative them and us ethos", says Ms Franchie. And movement of staff — and clients — throughout the entire area has been drastically re-thought. Some of the floor's few internal dividing walls curve, some fold back to reveal new space while others incorporate portholes or fish tanks to create new perspectives.

The design creates different moods in different areas, says Lydia Ney, senior designer at BDG McColl, Arthur Andersen's consultants. Visitors step out of the lift onto the floor at the "Hub", or reception area, where they can use the latest multimedia equipment. Opposite them are windows which extend across the entire length of the building overlooking The Strand. Along this runs the "Touchdown Bar", a narrow lip of workspace where staff are encouraged to sit at stools, plug in their laptops and phones and work for short periods of time.

Bright and airy, this area also serves as an informal corridor between the "Chaos" and "Zen" zones, which occupy opposite ends of the floor, to the left and the right. Back towards the rear of the building, away from The Strand, the mood quietsens with other work areas. No employee has their own office, although senior partners are allowed their own desk. As everyone works on laptop computers, the idea is that you work where you feel most comfortable — either with other members of your project team or to suit your mood. Staff have their own stylishly



Work experience: Plug in your laptop where you feel most comfortable John Voos

designed lockers — large enough to store work and computer when not in use. Navy and pale green banks of these units have been zoned into groups under different place names, ranging from Antwerp to Zurich (taking in Blackpool along the way "for fun", Ms Ney says). These are supplemented by "Bam Walls" — additional storage

areas ordered by topic, where project materials are stored. At one end of the floor is the "Chaos" area designed for group work and informal discussion. This is semi-partitioned from the rest of the floor by illustrated screens depicting a knot of cables and wires in vibrant red. All furniture and equipment is lightweight and on wheels, so the

space is constantly changing. The area also includes three brainstorming rooms — one red, one blue and one green — inspired by Edward de Bono. The idea is that you use the red room to energise a meeting at a slow time of the day. For a quieter, more calming environment, blue or green is advised.

At the opposite end of the

floor is the "Zen" zone — again divided by panels, which this time depict pebbles, sand and palm fronds in quiet hues. In this area, signs chant: "No meetings. No phones. No interruptions." It is space for quiet reflection (and, of course, fish tanks).

Technology has been the driving force throughout. Not only did Arthur Andersen want to incorporate the latest in PC and multimedia-ware to impress its clients, it also wanted to inspire staff. So, interactive white boards on the walls can be downloaded to laptop computers and infra-red transmitters will shortly enable staff to pick up TV, audio and corporate presentations from monitors positioned around the floor.

The net result is more efficient use of available space and a more effective, motivated workforce, claims UK projects manager Dean Smith. The old layout had room for 95, the new one accommodates up to 170 with 103 desks available at any one time. "An inherent problem in this building has been that we've lost meeting rooms as we've grown," he says. "This structure frees up more space — nine out of 10 meetings can be conducted in an informal area."

Three months in and the department has truly bedded down. "We have seen communication increase dramatically," says business consultant Abigail Clifton. "It's easier now to sit and share information with people from other groups within the department. It's noisier, but there is far more interaction."

Of course there were some reservations. "When you go from a cellular office to open plan, people always remark on the noise and loss of privacy," Mr Smith admits. "Hot desking" can make people insecure.

Even so, junior and senior staff adapted quickly. And even middle managers, whose initial resistance was fuelled by seeing hopes of their own future fiefdom fade, are finally coming on side.

Once, the regimented structure of the traditional office reinforced the corporate hierarchy. The office of the

Nineties, gurus claim, is demolishing traditional structures. And they are right — up to a point. True, Arthur Andersen Business Consulting staff now relish their new found flexible working and lead its break with tradition with everyone sharing the same space. But it is interesting to note that while Arthur

Andersen intends to re-design other departments, none will be as radical as here. Which, of course, will create an altogether new form of "cellular" structure — with Business Consulting set clearly aside from Arthur Andersen's other departments. Divide and rule lives on, then, if in a far subtler form.

INDEPENDENT

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London? Sorted

"OI GUV I see you're an Independent reader. Tell you what, you might be interested in this..."

"What?"

"I had a bloke wants to be the new mayor of London in the back of my cab."

"What was he like then?"

"Well guv, he combined all the qualities you need in this new post, being possibly the second most politically important person in the land. He was fashioned from an alloy of human qualities rarely found at the top of even our national political life."

"Gosh. What were they then?"

"Well, for starters, he's a right show-off. I thought to myself, here is someone who has the sheer vulgar appeal that means instant coverage whatever he does. A self-publicist who doesn't really have to try too hard. Maybe he occasionally gets into scrapes, if you know what I mean. A bit like Jeffrey Archer in that respect. But nothing to detract from the important job of speaking clearly for the capital here and abroad. A global voice, no less, I'd say. But he's not just an internationally famous populist elected by a method that gives him a clear mandate."

"Really?"

"No, there's another thing. He's got a vision for London. Now I've been around a bit and I can tell you that at just over seven million, London has the largest population of any major European city and, with a GDP of going on for £100bn, if London was a country, its economy would be as big as Portugal's. Not a lot of people know that. Now that's a big city and it needs a big vision. So he's got to know what he wants and concentrate on one or two key objectives. Just like that geezer in New York."

"Rudolph Giuliani?"

"Yeah, that's the one. You see, what he did was to concentrate on crime. And now New Yorkers feel safer and have much more self-confidence about themselves. I mean, I can remember when the place went bust. So the right man in the right job can make a difference, see?"

"Well, quite, yes."

"Going on holiday this year? Me and the wife went to Barcelona for ours. That's one hip and trendy place. They've had a few powerful - and effective - mayors. They got the Olympic Games a few years back. There you go. But London needs more than hip and more than PR. What we want is, excuse my French, a bit of radical social reform. And you used not to get much of that round our way. I mean, lots of well-meaning remarks, of course, but really nothing concrete. My idea of a good mayor is someone who has the determination to use the influence and resources - maybe £4bn he'll have to spend - available to really make a start. He can get the new London development authority in and tell them what's what. Now while he's sorting that out the second thing he wants to do is - hang on! Blackwall Tunnel! Now we're in trouble... Look, berk in a Merc... P*** off - yeah. As I was saying. Get an integrated transport policy. Plenty of scope there with the possibility of adding congestion charging to existing methods of finance like adjusting the local government precept - the council tax to me and you. Getting people out of cars and into public transport and of course that could be good news for us cabbies as well. And something else, talking about mayors. Ever been to Birmingham?"

"Yes, actually..."

"Yeah all those blokes polishing their Sierras eh? Now, don't get me wrong, it's no dump and they've done some good things. But, really, they want a mayor too. And Liverpool. And Manchester. In fact any city that wants to try new leadership and tackle the seemingly intractable problems of urban decline needs one. Besides if London's got one, you don't want him to hog all the limelight, and dosh, do you? They should go for it."

"But going back to this Mayor of London. He's not just a man of vision and the rest. He's got charm, political skills and brains. A bit like Ken Livingstone you might say in that regard. But our man's able to deal with politicians of all complexions, old Labour, new Labour, Tory, that other lot Paddy whistansane, you know what I mean? Don't get me wrong, you want someone where you know where he's coming from but you think, 'Yeah, he can work persuasively with others, he can pull a few strings, he can mess together the wide range of interests like business, the boroughs all those new bus and train companies.'"

"Now, I'm no mastermind but I could see that that man, he really bad that intellectual quality, know what I mean? Impressive bloke. At the same time he's able to mix it if people try it on. He's quite able to stand up to those buggers who run the country. No messing about. You could imagine Frank Dobson doing that a bit. Right. Here we are. House of Commons. And don't I recognise you? What did you say your name was again?"

"Er... Tony."

"Pleasure... Oil where's my tip?"

It's just not cricket

We live in an age when stereotypes are crumbling daily, especially in sport. Nowadays the Italians play rugby - and creditably. Irishwomen who traditionally were not encouraged to be sporty now win athletics world championships. English football clubs are black and foreign in impressive proportions.

We mustn't go too far in suggesting old patterns no longer hold. Nick Hornby may have convinced some that football is for sensitive types, but recent antics on Tyneside have cemented football's reputation as a pitch for boorish men. Perhaps there are real limits to how far traditional allegiances should be subverted.

There is something, well, outlandish about certain countries playing certain games. Take cricket. To know that there is a Bangladeshi side which is doing some international touring this summer is not surprising. But who are the Bangladeshi tourists playing in July? Scotland. The idea of Scots playing cricket invites one of those Doctor Johnsonisms about women, preachers and dogs. There is no reason why the Scots should be able to handle this particular ball except... it's English.



Standards for lobbyists

FRAN ABRAMS is right to raise concerns about the rapid influx of wet-behind-the-ears, ex-Labour researchers to the ranks of the lobbying industry ("Revealed: Labour's links with lobbyists", 24 March).

However, businesses need input into the political process, and more experienced advisers can play a vital role in ensuring that an organisation's corporate strategy does not simply ignore the nuances of emerging public policy. There is a clear difference between experienced, strategic advisers and those who trade entirely on their "links", such as they are.

There must also be a clear divide between the functions of an objective consultant and that of a party fund-raiser. Lobby firms must not become clearing houses for party political funding. That is a lesson Labour must take on board.

New Labour needs its own Green scandal like a hole in the head. The lobbying industry can play its part by sticking to the Association of Professional Political Consultants' Code of Conduct which is committed to absolute transparency, and ethical standards in public affairs consultancy. JOHN MCLEOD
Director
Shandwick Public Affairs
London EC4

Parents work too hard

CAROL SAVAGE is out on a limb when she says that she is "happy to work a 12-hour day", starting at 8am and finishing at midnight, stopping at 5pm to put her son to bed ("Inflexible employers 'driving women out of Britain's workforce'", 23 March). She claims that long working hours split between the office and home is the sort of "flexibility" employers should offer professional women who have children.

MSF is a trade union with 400,000 members working in professional and skilled occupations in the private and public sectors. Those with children need to be able to effectively balance their time spent on paid work and working for their family. Many par-

ents want to be able to rearrange, even reduce the hours spent on paid work.

Doing paid work until midnight assists neither the employer, whose employee will not be productive at that time; nor the working parent, who will be exhausted. Transferring the macho, ineffective, long hours culture from the office to the home is no answer. Parents need to be able to balance time effectively, not juggle an overload in working hours.

ROGER LYONS
General Secretary, MSF
London EC1

Children in care

WE loudly applaud Patricia Morgan's revelations and analysis of Britain's adoption system ("Social workers 'biased against adoption'", 23 March), if not all the recommendations for change. But, oh dear, oh dear, what of the reaction of such prominent bodies as the Association of Directors of Social Services and the British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering? They do nothing more than accuse, in familiar patronising manner, the accusers of being simplistic and misunderstanding the true nature of modern adoption.

There have been many other reports, including the Department of Health's own, that have condemned the current system for failing society's most vulnerable children. How refreshing it would be if the ADSS and BAAF came up with some plans and proposals themselves for improving the lot of children in care rather than staying locked into that old standby which I believe is known as "denial" in social services circles.

LIV O'HANLON
Director, The Adoption Forum
London SW8

LETTERS

Post letters to Letters to the Editor and include a daytime telephone number
Fax: 0171 293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Church-investments

INVESTING in the arms trade (report, 23 March) raises many ethical issues for churches.

Under international law it is recognised that there are legitimate uses for arms in terms of self-defence, as set out in Article 51 of the UN Charter. However, arms are not like other goods. They are designed to kill, injure and threaten. Church investment guidelines are often more scrupulous about investment in firms producing alcohol, tobacco, or even newspapers, than weapons.

Armed conflict is one of the main obstacles to development. As a development agency, Christian Aid would ask its supporting churches to look again at the consistency of preaching peace and investing in arms.

Many of our partners in situations of post-conflict reconstruction stress the Biblical message of turning "swords into ploughshares". In this context Christian Aid would welcome a rethinking of church investment policies. The guiding criterion must be that the life of the poor in areas of conflict must take priority over a high rate of return on investment in engineering and electronics firms, whether or not their business is wholly or mainly arms for export.

JENNY BORDEN
Acting Director
Christian Aid
London SE1

I MUST correct the impression given by James Savage's letter (25 March). The policy of the Church Commissioners is to invest in companies which have regard for employment practices, corporate governance, the environment and human rights, as well as their shareholders.

In our experience, these companies produce a good investment return and we have beaten independent benchmarks in recent years. Our policy is also to avoid investments in companies whose main business is in armaments, gambling, tobacco, 'tobacco', and newspapers, where we have specific ethical concerns.

The Commissioners do not invest in British Aerospace and have never done so. ANNE DICKENS
Head of Communications
The Church Commissioners
London SW1

It's not that far

BRIAN LANG, Chief Executive of the British Library, writes (letter, 23 March) that "a researcher's work would be considerably hampered by the need to trail back and forth across London between separate buildings housing the range of references being consulted".

The distance between the British Museum and the new library is, at most, three-quarters of a mile. I hope Mr Lang's bibliographic knowledge is better than his geographic. BARRY COLE
London EC1

Drink, for safety's sake

SO nearly a third of Scottish pedestrians hurt in traffic accidents had been drinking ("Drunk pedestrians", 25 March). Will we now hear calls for a new offence of walking whilst under the influence of drink or drugs? Would it be statistically safer, perchance, to imbibe until one loses the capacity to walk at all?

PETER ANDERSON
Llandrindod Wells,
Powys

Blair needs Blackpool

LABOUR's decision to abandon Blackpool ("Labour rocks Blackpool", 25 March) displays all the prejudices of Little Islington - abandoning the North, the working class and the whole notion of a party with individuals and trade unions making collective democratic decisions through annual conferences.

Nothing illustrates more clearly the social snobbery of this elite, bracking all links with those who brought them into office. This tiny unrepresentative section of upper middle class opinion thinks it can run the country the same way it runs the party. But Blackpool can do without Blair more than Blair can do without Blackpool. JOHN NICHOLSON
Manchester

Suing for distress

DR LEOPOLD FIELD (letter, 20 March) warns against accepting the Law Commission's proposals on liability for psychiatric illness and anticipates an "absolute flood" of psychiatric reports claiming that friends and relatives of the victims of accidents are suffering from "some form of psychological illness", which will result in an increase in insurance premiums.

The Law Commission report anticipates a 10 per cent increase in the number of personal injury claims at an increase in premium cost of 2.5 per cent (based on discussions with the Association of British Insurers). To describe this as a "flood" is emotive. To suggest that the legal profession is the true beneficiary is insulting. CHRISTOPHER HOUGH
London WC2

Citizens of Britain?

YOU ask if British children should be taught how to be citizens (leading article, 24 March). This is clearly a waste of money while we are all condemned to be subjects. DAVID WALKER
Sturtevant, Kent

The place to go for a crafty smoke at the Millennium Dome - the designer backside



MILES KINGTON

TODAY, we continue our award-winning off-beat series:-

Very Unusual Jobs indeed
Number 43: The man who is designing the back door of the Millennium Dome.

He is, perhaps, the only man in the world who describes himself as a Posterior Designer. He firmly believes that the back of a building is the most honest part of it.

"By your back doors ye shall know them." That is the motto that should be written over the entrance to every school of architectural design", he says. "Anyone can design a facade. Everyone can clean up the front of a building. Any fool of an architect can make the front look good, by clearing all the mess round to the back. So when I want to know how good a design concept is, I don't look at the front. I go round the back. That's the REAL side of the moon..."

The speaker is Otto Kerek, who has been put in charge of the backside of the Millennium Dome. He has never designed the front of a building in his life. He doesn't want to. All he wants to do is to do clever things with the other side.

"I think I first became fascinated with the backside of buildings when I grew up in the country and noticed that there was always one area of every farm which was different from all the rest. It was the secret, hidden place where they dumped the machinery that broke down. Know what I mean? A farmer has a tractor which grinds to a halt and won't go but is too good to throw away, so he puts it in the backyard waiting for a day when he can tinker with it. That day never comes. Instead, it is joined by a car, or a trailer, or an old caravan, which also will be mended one day. That day also never comes. Pretty soon there is one part of the farm which is looking like a rusty agricultural museum. That was the bit of

the farm that always fascinated me!"

When Otto Kerek started getting interested in buildings, he maintained his interest in the dark side. The kitchen and the refuse arrangements of great houses... the backstairs areas of palaces... the stage door areas of theatres... even the forgotten parts of churches...

"People think that churches are too holy to have a backside. Not true. Go round the back of most churches and you find shabby garden sheds, strange storehouses, mysterious entrances to the vestry, even forgotten loos... I found one church the other day where the vicar had had a TV lounge built on the back. Turned out he had a bit of a horse gambling problem, and used to sneak down there to watch the horses he had backed run on TV."

Wasn't that an expensive hobby?"

"Not really. He made quite a lot of money out of it. Sheer luck. Or, as he claimed, divine intervention. God used to show him the winners."

So, how does he envisage the backside of the Millennium Dome?

"Well, it's going to be difficult, because the kind of backsides I like best are those that have grown accidentally, organically, and obviously if I design it from scratch it will be a designer backside. But what I am going to do is latch on to the habit which has grown tremendously in the last ten years: the habit which has transformed the image of the back door: in other words, the habit of slipping out the back for a quick lag."

You mean... you're going to design the back of the great Millennium Dome as a place where people can have a quick crafty smoke?"

"I most certainly am. Smoking will be forbidden inside the Dome itself, for all the usual and boring reasons - health, safety, etc - so the back of the Dome will be the only place left for the nasty, normal side of life. Every large building you go past these days has a knot of guilty peo-

ple standing outside taking a quick smoke, so I thought it would be great to build on this late-20th century phenomenon and have the first designer smoking area. I'll make it comfortable. I'll make it smart. I'll equip it with cigarette vending machines, I'll have fresh coffee on tap and video machines playing clips from great old films in which Bogart and Bacall are constantly lighting up cigarettes... And there will be signs saying: 'Non-Smoking Forbidden'."

Won't there be a huge protest from all the health and politically correct people? Otto Kerek smiles.

"Let's hope so," he says. "We back door people will take on anyone. Remember my motto..."

You mean, 'By their back doors shall ye know them'?

"No," says Otto. "That's my other motto. The one I mean, is, I feel fine, and I'm out of line, because I design where the sun don't shine..."

21/COMMENT

The impossible dream – America without guns



RUPERT CORNWELL
JONESBORO WILL BE NO DUNBLANE

FOR AN instant, when I heard the news from Jonesboro on Tuesday evening, I had a dream. In that nano-second of hopeless optimism, I thought, this might be it. A teacher and four children dead, gunned down by their own. Finally, America would come to its senses and just as New Labour did last year after Dunblane, get rid of the gun. Then I woke up.

How hard it is for us foreigners to understand America's relationship with the gun. I lived there for six years, and I still don't understand. It's not for want of trying. I can reel off the reasons for this deadliest obsession: the country's tradition of individual liberty and the right of self-defence, which a gun is supposed to personify; the enduring myth of the frontier and the Wild West (personified by cinema's ultimately pathetic figure, the cowboy without a gun); the status that guns confer especially on the young, and the fear bred by proliferation, the belief that the only protection from armed men is to carry arms oneself.

I have thought long and hard about America's culture of violence. I have counted the number of fatal shootings per hour of prime-time TV. I've talked to rednecks, militia leaders, Virginia gunshop owners and ice-eyed spokesmen of the National Rifle Association, the legendary potent lobby group. I can recite by heart the infamous Second Amendment of 1791, which provides constitutional underpinning for the gun. "A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed." No matter that the militias referred to were intended to safeguard the populace from King George's redcoats and hostile Indian tribes, and that the amendment is as relevant to modern America as the Corcoran Laws to modern Britain. Woe betide he who dares suggest the US Constitution falls short of perfection.

You may revile the NRA. You may mock the fatuous cynicism of its most famous slogan, "Guns don't kill people, people do." On the basis of its foundation in 1871 by former Union officers to improve the poor marksmanship of their men during the Civil War, the NRA likes to talk of itself as the oldest civil rights group in the world. For us, the assertion is akin to the Nazi party claiming humanitarian breakthroughs in eugenics; to members of the organisation, it is a self-evident truth.

But while I understand, I do not understand. For all the compendious knowledge itemised above, I looked on disbelieving at the great debate that swirled in Virginia a few years back about the infringements of human liberty that would ensue when the state limited handgun purchases to one per person per

month. I could not, and still cannot, grasp how one such tragedy after another does not convince America that the carnage caused by firearms (40,000-odd deaths a year, half of them murders) far outweighs whatever benefit they might bring.

For the novelty of Jonesboro is not that it happened at a school, pupil-on-pupil, or that the gunmen in question were 11 and 13, or even the motive (the older boy seems to have been taking revenge for being killed by his girlfriend). In Paducah, Kentucky three months ago, and Mississippi two months before that, teenage students shot dead their peers, one of them having shortly beforehand dispatched his mother. Jonesboro's distinguishing feature is that it happened in President Clinton's home state. How could this happen to us, a resident wondered, "these things are supposed to happen somewhere else". Yes, somewhere else: like Paducah, or the humdrum Texas town of Killeen – where George Hennard walked into a diner one morning in 1991 and shot 23 people dead – or, for that matter, Dunblane.

But just suppose my dream was true. Imagine that the NRA lay down like a lamb. Imagine Congress metamorphosing into the House of Commons and banning all handguns, and that the manufacturers who turn out two million weapons a year meekly close down their businesses. It wouldn't make an iota of difference. Quite simply, the number of guns in circulation has long since passed the point of no return. Imported weapons, legal and less legal, continue to pour into the US. Some time soon, the handgun population (an estimated 222 million in 1992) of the US will

The population of handguns will overtake the human one soon

overtake the human one (265 million at the last count). Ban guns, offer a king's ransom for them, do what you like. Bought or borrowed, inherited or stolen, they will continue to be available to all comers.

And that is the argument the gun lobby so mischievously employs. Having watered down any proposals that do reach the floor of Congress, it then argues that the new law will make scant difference – so why bother? Thus it was with the Brady Bill, which imposed a five-day waiting period on the purchase of handguns. So it was with the ban on various assault weapons, which the House of Representatives voted to repeal just a week after Dunblane. But true gun-lovers even recruited that massacre to their cause, as proof that even in countries where guns were few and relatively hard to come by, these things still happen. Why penalise the "vast majority of responsible gun owners" for the lunacies of the few?

And so the cycle will be repeated. Hands will be wrung raw. There will be a heart-breaking funeral, innumerable vows of "never again". President Clinton, who, let it be said, has tried harder than most of his predecessors to slow the spread of firearms, has once more urged America to search its soul. Eminent men will examine adolescent alienation and the defects of the school system. The NRA may lose some support. But in a week, a month, a year, there will be another tragedy. The incomprehensible cult of the gun will prevail. When America ends it will not be with a bang or a whimper, but a shoot-out.

Mix-ups: Princess Di marge, Mrs Bean, misquotations, and some curious DNA

JOHN WALSH



Winged Icarus, the Patron Saint of Bad Ideas

Getty Images

SIX MONTHS after the death of the Princess of Wales, her memory is being cherished with margarine – should Mr Peter Bottomley have his way – seat belts. The former Transport minister has been saying he thinks that a new "Wear Your Seatbelt" campaign should feature history's most famous car-crash victim as a kind of awful warning, and his tactful suggestion coincides with the arrival of the first tubs of Flora margarine bearing her signature (and sanctioned by the Princess's Charitable Trust, proceeds to God knows where) on the shelves of your local Sainsbury's.

What a charming dual gesture. Myself, I have no interest in margarine beyond knowing that the profits from its manufacture helped to fund the publication of Cyril Connolly's literary magazine *Horizon* at the start of the second World War. But I can't imagine what the Princess would have made of this marketing thrust, and its implied connection between herself and a tub of centrifugally-spun designer grease. Were she in a posidotto to care, I suppose she might feel thankful that at least her face hasn't actually been sculpted in the stuff, and that it's not a tube of some intimate groinal balm ("By-Royal-Appointment Ointment") on which her dainty signature now appears.

But the seatbelts issue does make you cringe a bit. As with the famous Cretan holiday firm which briefly called Icarus ("A better way to go...") it may

seem logical but it gives the wrong signals. Saying, in effect, "Wear Your Seat-Belt – Princess Di Didn't!" doesn't carry much suggestion of caring and tenderness. And judging by the reaction to Mr Bottomley's plan, people don't want to think the cause of Diana's death was something as prosaic as seatbelt mismanagement. Conspiracy, murder, happenstance, Middle East hitmen, Sandringham guerrillas, divine intervention, alien assault – all please out because a few feet of restraining harness were undeployed.

If Mr Bottomley prevails, however, after the Princess Di Seatbelt Campaign is launched we must expect a slew of further bad-taste initiatives: the Sonny Booo Skiing Holiday, the Viv Stanshall Smoke Alarm, the Isadora Duncan Headscarf Campaign, the James Dean Memorial Airbag, the Stephen Milligan Eat More Fruit Campaign, the Michael Hutchence Adoption Agency...

Chris Smith, our delightful Heritage Secretary, was on Radio Four's Today programme talking about what a good year it's been for British movies. "Ah yes," he told John Humphrys, "what with *The Full Monty*, *Shooting Fish*, *Wings of the Dove*, *Mrs Bean*..."

Mrs Bean, eh? You must have seen it. The touching story of a love affair that crossed boundaries of class, taste and protocol, in which Queen Victoria thaws from

frozen widowhood to a newly vivid appreciation of life because of the attentions of a rubber-faced twit in a cheap suit who absent-mindedly runs an electric razor over his tongue in the morning, twists his face into hideous grimaces and dips little wooden twigs into bowls of Marmite to make cheap and tasty snacks for his guests. Starring Dame Judi Dench and Rowan Atkinson, it's another triumph of understated British comedy and Mr Smith is right to be proud of it. Next month, *The Full Mrs Dalloway*...

That ceaselessly inventive novelist Jim Crace, author of *Quarantine*, is up to his old tricks again, I hear. A couple of weeks ago, the *Daily Express* rang to ask if he'd like to contribute to their Saturday "Bookshop" slot, in which a celebrated author is given a measly £30 and told to go mad, blow it all on books and explain the reason for their choice. Mr Crace faxed over 400 words praising the talents of Ellis Winward and Prof Michael Soule and their seminal work *The Limits of Mortality*, which, Crace explains, "puts notions of Heaven, Eternity and Judgement Day from all world cultures under scientific, unblinking scrutiny". Although the authors themselves, he further explains, quarrelled so badly over the question of whether the word "god" should have a capital G that they came to blows. Readers of *Quarantine* will remember that a short extract from Winward and

Soule's important eschatological study forms the epigraph to that novel. Mr Crace's other choices sound equally attractive – *The Poetry of Abraham Hopper*, "one of literature's first cocaine addicts as well as a pioneer conservationist and ecologist", and the new Penguin edition of the *Histories of Eusebius*, the second-century fantasist who reported back from exotic bits of the Mediterranean, and whose discoveries provide the gorgonous epigraph (translated by the crusty Edwardian explorer Sir Harry Penn Butler) to Crace's first novel, *Continents*.

The books people at the *Express* read this trio of recommended titles, blinked, wondered why they'd overheard of any of them and wondered also how close it was to April Fool's Day. Because Crace's contribution was, of course, a farrago of inventions from start to finish. But stand by for a new Crace novel in which Prof Winward, Hopper, Eusebius and Sir Harry form a close-harmony singing troupe.

Strange news comes in from Oxford University, more precisely from the Institute of Molecular Medicine, where a team of geneticists has been exploring the kind of people Europeans spring from. After taking blood samples from 6,000 people, they compared the DNA strand with that

taken from the remains of Stone Age people (don't ask me) and found disturbing similarities. Not only did the 6,000 guinea pigs turn out to be genetically similar, they all seemed to be descended from the same people – the race of Britons that stalked the valleys left by glaciers after the Ice Age, 8,000 years BC.

Imagine. We're all just British, after all. In biological terms, we're all as British as Betty Boothroyd. All of us: Liverpool dockers weeping over pints of stout, the Duchess of Kent, pink-necked Gloucestershire public schoolboys, horny-handed Poplar costermongers, exquisitely Frenchified hairdressers in Jermyn Street, whiskery high-court judges, low-rent *horizontals* in Shepherd Market – we're all just as British as each other.

This is a ghastly revelation. I have spent 40-odd years believing that my Irish-Celtic ancestry rendered my genes a sight more thrilling, more sexy, more dashing, more romantic, more charging-into-battle-with-nothing-on-and-looking-like-Mel-Gibson heroic than the gang of stodgy burghers and duplicitous nancy-boys that make up the Anglo-Saxon race.

As for the effete Normans, the ludicrously melodramatic Norsemen, the boringly fascist Saxons, the unspeakable Goths... Well, can you wonder that other nn being blue-eyed, charming and dynamic in the sack? And now you discover that, no foreign influences, like invasions, migrations and simple maraudings, managed to make a dent in the British ur-gene that started us all.

But wait a minute. Look more closely and you find that the research has been done on genes inherited direct from the maternal line, so, until the father's. They've yet to start on the Y-chromosome (ie bloke) stuff. But surely it's absurd to expect the DNA of Stone Age females to be subject to racial change or to be altered much through generations. It was the men, after all, not the womenfolk, who did the racial marauding, the invading, migrating, rape and pillage. So, until the results of the male DNA come in, I'll stick with my Celtic-hillside fantasies.

From little splinters can grow tomorrow's terrorism



DAVID MCKITTERICK
ON THE FUTURE OF THE IRA

SECURITY people in Northern Ireland have always been divided on the question of the desirability of splits in the IRA. Some have believed that such schisms are a good idea which should surreptitiously be encouraged to the full.

Others in the security field, who these days are in the ascendancy, regard splits as messy, dangerous and most likely to produce continuing violence. They do not believe the present IRA ceasefire will last for ever, but their view is that, whether in war or at peace, it is preferable for the terrorist organisation to stick together.

These analysts are now watching anxiously as two republican break-away groups have grown steadily in manpower and technology. They already appear to have attained the capacity to undermine and disrupt the peace process at this most sensitive of times.

The question now is whether all this will develop from splinters into full-scale splits. The new, and as yet unnamed, group which has just emerged as a significant threat has so far carried out less than half-a-dozen attacks, but intelligence sources say it has developed rapidly in its short lifetime and is showing dangerous potential.

That much is known, but in the hazy republican underworld much else is unclear. It is not known whether the new group is cooperating with the "Continuity Army Council", the previous breakaway group which dates back to 1986 and which has recently ruined a number of town centres with large car-bombs. It is also unclear whether the new group is receiving unofficial support from individual IRA members who are still attached to the mainstream terrorist group. Some

small amounts of deadly Semtex plastic explosives, on which the IRA was thought to have a monopoly, have turned up in non-IRA devices.

The signs are that, despite Unionist claims to the contrary, any such co-operation is not officially sanctioned by the IRA's leadership. But the state of opinion within the IRA itself looks distinctly febrile: Sinn Féin seems anxious to be at the table, but the IRA certainly killed two men in Belfast earlier this year, resulting in the temporary suspension of Sinn Féin from the talks. IRA members also killed a third man in February, though the authorities say they have been unable to establish whether this had been

anywhere. Another source said: "They are serious people who have made a significant contribution. They have been around the struggle for a long, long time, but they were people who haven't been active for a long time."

Given subsequent developments, the mainstream IRA may well have underestimated the renegades' capacity for growth. The new group certainly seems to be making good use of the experience picked up by two of the original dissidents when they held key IRA positions. One, as a former quartermaster-general, was in charge of the IRA's armoury and would thus know where a great deal of its weapon-

Even a year ago it would have been hard to believe that such new groups could have emerged so quickly and proved so dangerous

authorised by the IRA leadership. There are therefore many uncertainties as the talks approach their 9 April deadline.

The genesis of the new group lies in an important IRA meeting which took place last November. This brought to a head the opposition to the peace process as mapped out by Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams and his supporters. A number of traditionalists forced a vote, were heavily defeated, and subsequently walked away from the organisation.

Sources close to the IRA were dismissive: "They put their case and it was overwhelmingly rejected," one said at the time. "They didn't get any support,

ry was concealed. Another, an important figure in the "engineering department", is skilled in the design and construction of the IRA's assortment of home-made but deadly weapons. He may have made the mortars that were fired at Forkhill RUC station on Tuesday night.

No reliable estimates are available of how many may have joined the new grouping. As yet it is clearly minuscule compared with the IRA itself, but with IRA technology at its disposal even a small number of activists can cause considerable damage and disruption. It is no accident that both the CAC and the new group are predominantly based south of the border in the Irish

Republic. In the north, the Adams leadership had brought most republicans along with it, and, indeed, carved out new areas of support with its brand of pragmatic modernisation. Its vote is at an all-time high.

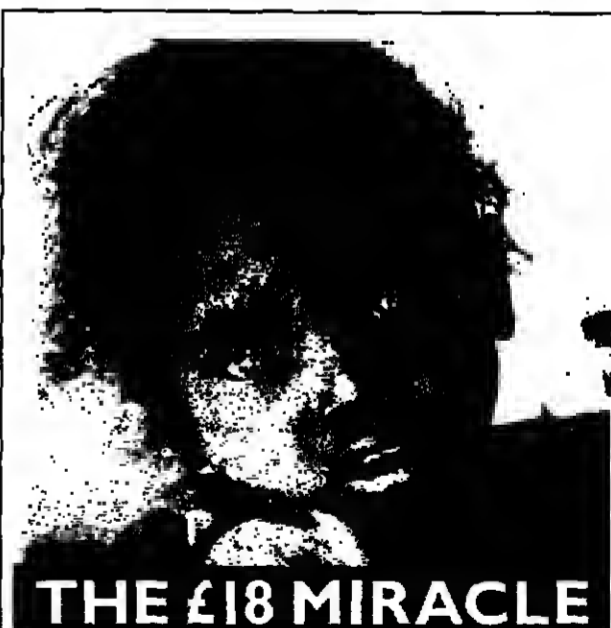
The south, however, has a number of pockets of more traditionalist republicans who have suspicions and reservations about the peace process, and it is here that the splinters have picked up support.

This has been curiously mirrored on the loyalist side, where it has emerged that the fierce new Loyalist Volunteer Force, which is less than a year old, has picked up members from the existing and less active Protestant paramilitary groups. It, too, will be intent on using force to knock the talks off course.

Even a year ago it would have been hard to believe that such new groups could have emerged so quickly and proved themselves so dangerous. The lesson seems to be that Northern Ireland has a ready pool of militancy permanently on tap, always available to step in if established groupings show the slightest signs of going soft.

The prevailing security-force view on the desirability of splits was spelled out some years ago by RUC Chief Constable Ronnie Flanagan, when he said: "If we are going to have a peace delivered, then we can't have people fragmenting all over the place and engaging unilaterally in violence."

If the militant new groups continue to develop, he and everyone else in Northern Ireland will have to face a hard fact: that even if the talks succeed, a process of paramilitary disintegration and proliferation could mean that hardliners will have the capacity to stop peace coming about.



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FINANCIAL JOURNAL OF THE YEAR

Bacardi set to win American whisky giant Dewar's for £800m

By Andrew Yates

BACARDI, the drinks giant which produces the famous white rum, is set to buy Dewar's, America's leading whisky brand. The Bermuda-based group has fought off intense competition from the world's leading drinks groups to emerge as front-runner to buy Dewar's in what will be one of the highest deals the industry has seen. Bacardi is willing to pay around £800m for the brand, industry sources say.

A deal is believed to be imminent. Bacardi is close to finalising an agreement and could seal the acquisition within the next few days – barring a last-minute blockbuster bid from a trade rival or one of several financial buyers which have cast their eyes over the group.

Dewar's has been put up for sale by Diageo, the world's largest drinks group which was formed last December when Grand Metropolitan merged with Guinness. Diageo has also been forced to dispose of Dewar's in order to get the

European and American competition authorities to approve its mega-merger.

The sale of Dewar's offered a unique opportunity to buy one of the world's leading spirits brands and attracted interest from around the globe. Up until a few weeks ago Diageo was still talking to a number of drinks groups about the sale of Dewar's. Now, however, Bacardi seems to have beaten Pernod Ricard, the French drinks group, and Seagram, the French drinks group, and Seagram of Canada in the race to capture the whisky brand. Allied Domecq was also

interested in Dewar's but dropped out of the race after the price sailed above £600m.

Bacardi is a private group run by descendants of Don Facundo Bacardi, the group's founder. He created Cuba's first rum in 1862. However, the family fled Cuba in 1960 when Fidel Castro took over the country and seized the company's assets.

Since then the family has built up Bacardi to become the world's leading drinks brand, with annual sales of 19.5 million cases.

In 1993 Bacardi expanded its empire by buying Martini & Rossi which sells the world renowned vermouth. It also produces Asti sparkling wine and Hatuey beer. However it has always lacked a major whisky brand in its spirits portfolio.

Dewar's is the leading scotch brand in the US, selling just under 3 million cases a year and making annual operating profits of around £55m. The £800m price tag smashes analysts' earlier forecasts.

A Diageo spokesman refused to comment on any sale and said that talks be-

tween the drinks groups were confidential. If Bacardi does buy Dewar's it could be welcome news for the Scotch whisky industry as the spirits group is likely to maintain a large part of the existing business in Scotland.

The creation of Diageo is likely to lead to a worldwide consolidation of the drinks industry. Allied Domecq is looking to find a drinks partner to take on the new industry Goliath and could increase its efforts to establish a tie up with Bacardi in the wake of the Dewar's deal.

Utilities to face profits clawback

By Michael Harrison

THE PRIVATISED utilities will have to share profits with customers where they are "unearned" or result from deliberately misleading regulators, under Government proposals unveiled yesterday.

The long-awaited Green Paper on utility regulation also sets out plans to bring the pricing of the gas, electricity, water and telecoms industries under a greater degree of political control.

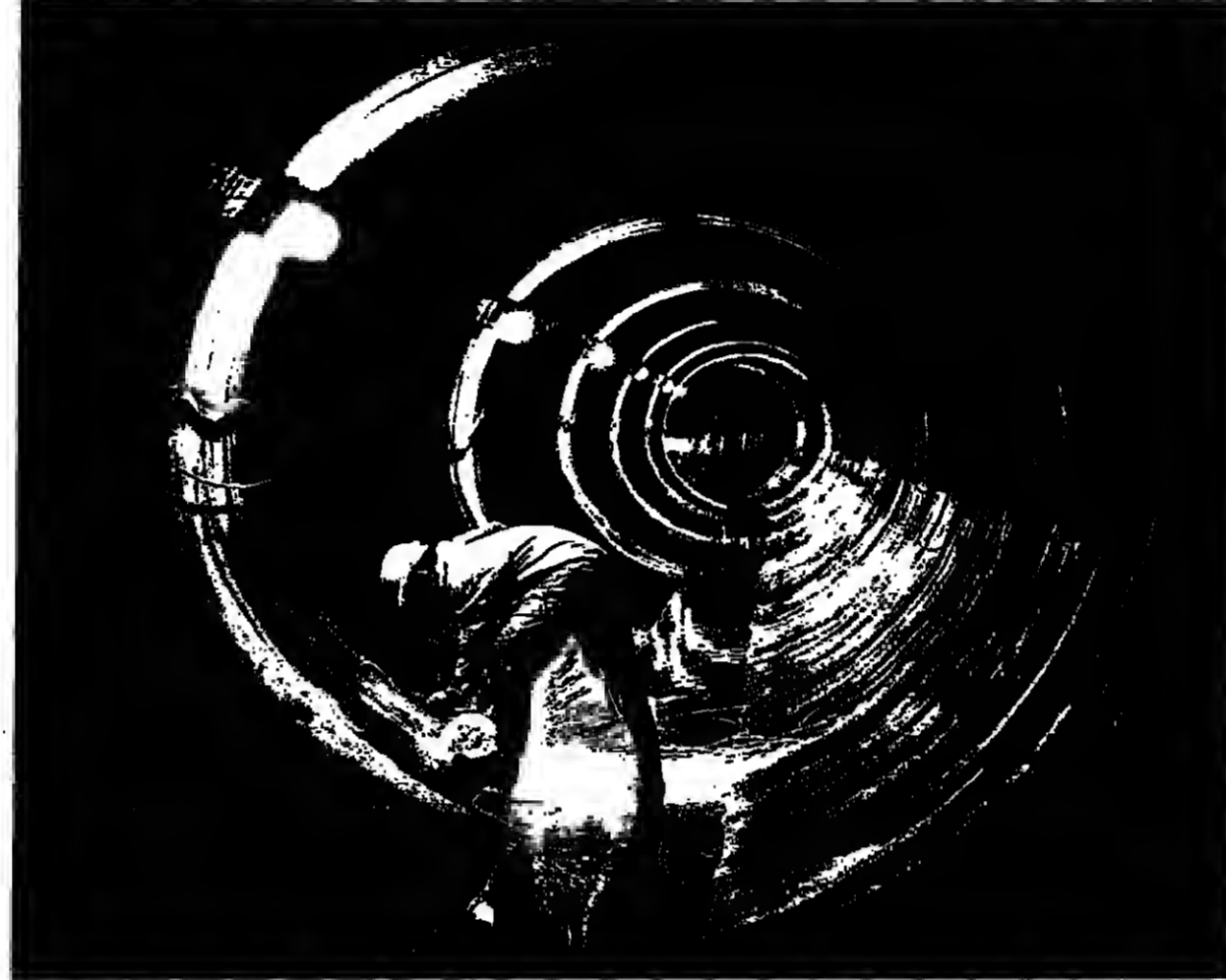
Shares prices of the privatised water companies rose in response to the decision, widely expected, not to alter the fundamental way in which prices are controlled. The Department of Trade and Industry had wanted to include a mechanism for capping excess profits but was overruled by the Treasury. Individual regulators for each of the industries will be issued with statutory guidance requiring them to take the

Government's wider social and environmental aims into account in pricing the utilities.

This means that they could have an explicit obligation to protect the interests of poorer consumers and other disadvantaged groups through, for instance, cross-subsidisation of prices. The regulators would also have a new primary statutory duty to protect consumer interests.

However, the Government has decided to stick with the system of incentive regulation developed over the last 15 years whereby the RPI-X formula – which sets percentage price rises below inflation – is retained as "fundamental basis for price regulation".

This will allow companies to keep profits which result from greater efficiency. But alongside this the Government has proposed an "error correction mechanism" which would allow excess profits to be clawed back promptly. The mechanism would be



In the pipeline: The Government wants its social and environmental aims to be re-enforced by the regulators

triggered either when companies benefited from factors outside their control – for instance, a sudden drop in costs of supplies – or when they had deliberately misled regulators into setting too lenient a price cap by giving inaccurate or incomplete information.

Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade, insisted the Government was not returning to Old Labour ways by penalising the utilities. She said a better deal for the consumer

would be achieved by "competition where possible, regulation where necessary".

But John Redwood, the shadow Trade and Industry Secretary, said the proposals could amount to a "back door" tax on business and warned they could lead to permanent uncertainty about how much they could earn and afford to invest. "She should set a price control and live with it," he added.

The Green Paper also proposes

■ The merger of the electricity and gas regulators, Ofreg and Ofgas, into a single energy regulator.

■ Separation of electricity supply (buying and selling of electricity) from distribution – the wires which deliver electricity.

■ Greater openness and accountability with a requirement on regulators to justify key decisions.

The Government said it had not ruled out the idea of advisory panels to aid individual reg-

ulators. Replies are being sought by the end of May.

Mrs Beckett said there was no reason why the review should not lead to lower prices but this would be achieved through a mixture of fairer regulation and the opening up of the markets to competition particularly in gas and electricity.

The proposals were broadly welcomed by the regulators themselves, consumer groups, and the industries involved.

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Argos enlists Littlewoods

By Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

ARGOS unveiled radical plans to modernise its business yesterday after admitting that it had become out of step with customers' needs.

The group announced a new retailing strategy and a home shopping joint venture with Littlewoods as part of its fight against the hostile £1.6bn bid from Great Universal Stores.

It is to spend up to £5m on a modernising programme that will see its stores upgraded with better racking and improved window displays while its old fashioned catalogue will be made more modern and user-friendly. More higher-value products will be added to improve customer choice though the company said it would not compromise on its commitment to low prices.

Stuart Rose, who has only been Argos chief executive for six weeks, admitted that Argos had to become a little more fashionable. "It has been one step behind customers in fashion rather than half a step ahead." The shops will start to stock "impulse" ranges such as greeting cards, wrapping paper, and videos in an attempt to grab more revenue from existing customers.

Mr Rose pledged to improve the margins by 1 per cent over two years by improving the sales mix, adding more own-label and exclusive ranges which carry higher mar-

ups and by increasing the level of direct sourcing.

The strategy statement came as the company released a trading update which showed that same-store sales had improved with a 4.8 per cent increase in the 12 weeks to 12 March. Margins were up by 0.5 percentage points in the same period.

The group's second defence document, which is expected to include the return of cash to shareholders, will be published next week if the GUS bid is cleared by the Office of Fair Trading. The Takeover Panel yesterday extended the offer timetable, saying Argos will now have two days following the OFT's decision to release its last information.

Argos's joint venture agreement with Littlewoods will see the pair launch a fashion home shopping catalogue aimed at Argos customers. The 700-page catalogue will consist of branded clothing and be tested later this year. A national roll-out is planned for autumn 1999. Littlewoods will produce the catalogue and handle the orders, while Argos will provide its customer database.

The joint venture's costs were described as "minimal" by Mr Rose, who said expected losses in the first year could be around £2m each. The company will use the database to target higher-spending customers. A home delivery service will be rolled out nationally next year at a cost of £15m.

Outlook, page 25

Brussels insists Britain must rejoin the ERM

By Katherine Butler

BRITAIN would have to rejoin the revamped exchange rate mechanism – which the pound crashed out of in September 1992 – if it wanted to abandon the pound and join the euro zone, the European Commission made clear yesterday.

But the Commission has left the door open to technical membership for a period shorter than the two years mentioned in the Maastricht Treaty, saying that exchange rate stability is the key. A revamped ERM is set to be launched next January.

In its definitive recommendation on economic convergence of the countries fit to join EMU in the 1999 first wave, the Commission ruled out Sweden – which has never been a mem-

ber of the ERM and which has experienced major fluctuations against the ERM currencies.

But the Commission recommended that Italy and Finland, who only joined the ERM in November 1996 and October 1996 respectively, and therefore do not strictly fulfil the membership criterion, should be admitted.

Clearly the onus would still be on Britain to ensure sterling shadowed the euro after its launch and to find a way of demonstrating stability without being in the new currency grid. The Treasury repeated yesterday the insistence of Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, that Britain has "no intention" of rejoining the ERM.

That aside, the budgetary position of the UK and its performance on inflation would qualify Britain for membership.

The Commission's spring economic forecasts also show Government borrowing as a percentage of gross domestic product is expected to fall this year to 0.6 per cent, down from 1.9 per cent in 1997, due to the windfall tax on the profits of privatised utilities.

The Commission forecasts the deficit will fall again in 1999 to 0.3 per cent. It warns that because the bulk of the revenue from the windfall tax will not be spent until after 1998, the positive effect on the deficit will begin to unwind as revenues are spent.

Britain is one of only four members whose debt is below the 60 per cent of GDP target set by the treaty. The spring forecasts put the British debt to GDP ratio at 52.3 per cent this year falling to 50.9 per cent next year.

Outlook, page 25

Cheap holidays for Thomson investors

By Andrew Yates

THOMSON Travel Group, the UK's largest tour operator, is planning to offer 10 per cent discounts on all its holidays for private investors who buy shares in its forthcoming £1.5bn flotation.

Customers will be able to save almost £50 on the price of an average holiday while a family jetting off to the sun stands to save £120 on a typical break.

Investors who apply for at least £500 worth of shares will

be allowed to join the Thomson Founders' Club. As well as cheap holidays they will qualify for a range of perks including seat upgrades on the group's Britannia airline, the chance to have the best hotel rooms on offer, additional luggage allowances and newsletters with special holiday offers.

The 10 per cent discount will apply to all holidays advertised in the Thomson and Skytours brochures as well as getaways with Holiday Cottages. A member of the club will be able to

apply for as many holidays as he or she wants providing they travel with the party.

Thomson Travel plans to send details of the perks to more than a million of its customers through the post. It is also launching a national TV advertising campaign to entice the public to subscribe for shares.

The group will issue a flotation prospectus in late April and will join the stock market in early May. Analysts estimate that the group could be valued at up

to £1.5bn, although strong interest from private investors and financial institutions could push that price tag even higher.

The shares will not be offered at a discount to employees, although they are likely to be given preferential treatment when the shares are allocated.

Private investors can register for the share offer by contacting share shops including Barclays Stockbrokers, Hargreaves Lansdown, NatWest Brokers, Skipton Building Society and The Share Centre.

About 10 per cent of the shares in the flotation are likely to be allocated to private investors. Another 20 per cent are likely to be taken by the founding Thomson family with the rest awarded to financial institutions.

Thomson's flotation comes as Lunn Poly, his travel agency, continues its battle against the Government over the imposition of a 17.5 per cent insurance premium tax. Thomson is awaiting the outcome of a judicial review into the tax hike.

City watchdog plans much harsher penalties

By Lea Paterson

THE WATCHDOG responsible for City of London traders yesterday unveiled plans to introduce far stiffer penalties for breaches of its rules. If the proposals from the Securities and Futures Authority (SFA)

are accepted, penalties for firms that fall foul of the regulator could increase fourfold.

Individuals who breach SFA rules could find themselves with double the penalties they could expect to receive under the current regime.

The SFA says also it wants to "foster the notion that good

compliance is good business" and is proposing that fines be reduced, or even waived altogether, if firms have good compliance procedures and notify the SFA of any breaches.

The watchdog said: "If a firm with adequate controls discovers an issue in a timely way and promptly informs the SFA,

giving the full facts (together with a proposed course of remedial action – including compensation where necessary – disciplinary action will be very much less likely."

The SFA proposals, released yesterday, listed additional factors that it believes should be taken into consideration when

setting fines. These include the number of rule breaches, the time scale over which the breaches occurred, whether there was widespread wrongdoing throughout the firm and the means of the firm in question to pay fines.

Firms have until 30 April to respond.

Yesterday in the markets

STOCK MARKETS

Index	Close	Change	Change (%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	5067.80	-15.90	-0.31	6105.80	4189.10	3.40
FTSE 250	5544.40	21.10	0.38	5820.10	4384.20	2.99
FTSE 350	2888.00	-4.20	-0.15	2917.00	2075.70	3.32
FTSE All Share	2795.85	-3.00	-0.11	2838.77	2058.07	3.29
FTSE SmallCap	2826.20	12.40	0.44	2810.50	2225.20	3.21
FTSE Healthcare	1414.30	-0.80	-0.06	1410.50	955.90	1.64
FTSE AIM	1058.70	-0.20	-0.02	8920.88	6888.78	1.57
Dow Jones	7851.84	25.91	0.33	20910.78	14488.21	0.97
Nikkei	18688.34	51.95	0.28	18688.34	7808.13	3.27
Hong Kong	11870.65	185.20	1.57	11870.65	3192.33	1.59
Hang Seng	5096.82	68.38	1.36	5096.82	3192.33	1.59

INTEREST RATES

Short sterling	UK 10 year gilt	US long bond
3 month 1 yr 5 yr 10 yr	1 yr 5 yr 10 yr	1 yr 5 yr 10 yr
7.56 1.19 7.56 0.68 5.80 -1.66 5.82 -1.89	5.68 -0.07 5.81 -0.41 5.61 -1.16 5.91 -1.08	5.09 0.13 0.70 -0.09 1.79 -0.74 2.36 -0.79
Germany 3.53 0.26 3.79 0.34 4.88 -1.01 5.43 -1.24		

CURRENCIES

\$/£	DM/£	¥/£
at 5pm	at 5pm	at 5pm
1.6745 -0.008 1.6189	0.5872 +0.030 0.6185	162.78 -0.19 162.78
0.0612 -0.17 0.0612	1.8278 -0.19 1.8278	200.13 -0.19 200.13
215.84 -22.32 215.84	128.90 -0.19 128.90	108.50 -0.00 108.50
107.00 0.00 107.00		

TOURIST RATES

Australia (dollars)	2.400	Italy (lira)	2,938
Austria (schillings)	20.86	Japan (yen)	214.24
Belgium (francs)	61.21	Malta (lira)	0.6407
Canada (\$)	2.3067	Netherlands (guilders)	3.3498
Cyprus (pounds)	0.8631	Norway (kroner)	12.37
Denmark (kroner)	11.38	Portugal (escudos)	301.49
Finland (markka)	9.0755	Spain (pesetas)	251.15
France (francs)	9.9441	South Africa (rand)	7.9743
Germany (marks)	2.9774	Sweden (kroner)	12.97
Greece (drachme)	514.53	Switzerland (francs)	2.4315
Hong Kong (\$)	12.56	Turkey (lira)	386,075
Ireland (pounds)	1.1792	USA (\$)	1.6331

Source: Thomas Cook

Deep Pan Pizza chain to disappear

By Andrew Yates

DEEP PAN Pizza restaurants, best known for offering "all you can eat" deals for hungry punters, are set to disappear from the high street.

The move comes in response to a sharp fall in profits at the chain caused by the growing trend for customers to dine out in more exotic and upmarket food.

City Centre Restaurants, which owns the troubled chain, has decided to scrap the Deep Pan Pizza name and create a new upmarket chain of pizza restaurants.

It is also looking to sell some sites or convert them to other restaurant brands.

James Naylor, chief executive of City Centre, said yesterday: "The brand was becoming dated. Thin crust pizzas are becoming more popular, with fewer people eating deep pan."

There are currently 89 Deep Pan Pizza restaurants around the UK.

City Centre plans to keep the 35 sites which are located alongside out-of-town leisure centres. They will still sell pizzas but rename the restaurants and introduce higher class menus.

About 30 high street sites will be used in house City Centre's other restaurants such as Caffè Uno while the remaining restaurants will be sold.

City Centre revealed it had received tentative offers for all its high street sites and would consider selling them if it received an attractive offer. "We could sell the restaurants if we get the right price, but it is very early days at the moment," said Mr Naylor.

City Centre has already had to install new management at Deep Pan Pizza after profits from the chain fell £2m last

DEEP PAN PIZZA CO

year. The group blames poor management, huge discounting and larger menus which added to costs, for the shortfall.

The result was an improvement in the chain's performance but not enough to justify its continued existence. The chain will be phased out over the next few years.

Despite the problems at Deep Pan, City Centre unveiled a 4 per cent rise in pre-tax profits to £17.5m for the year in December.

Mr Naylor said the group planned to open at least another 46 restaurants this year.

City Centre is planning an aggressive expansion of its Caffè Uno Italian style eateries, opening another 15 in the next 12 months.

New chains such as Frankie & Benny's, based on a New York in the 1950s theme, and Wink Wok, which specialises in modern Asian food, are proving a success and will also be rolled out rapidly.

Last year's acquisition of Est Est Est, the North of England Italian chain, has exceeded expectations and another six restaurants are due to open soon.

City Centre denied the restaurant market was becoming overcrowded after an explosion in openings in recent years.

Mr Naylor said: "The eating out market is set to continue growing very fast... driven by lifestyle changes. As people age they are turning away from McDonald's and eating out in restaurants."

City Centre's shares, which fell sharply after a recent profit warning prompted by Deep Pan's problems, recovered 6.5p to 118p yesterday.



The droop: At Bernard Matthews, profits are down by 24 per cent

NTI

Pound batters Matthews

By Kerry Benefield

TURKEY magnate Bernard Matthews was hit hard by the strength of the pound in 1997, as he watched profits at the company that bears his name fall 24 per cent.

The group, whose activities include the production and marketing of meat and fish products as well as insurance, posted profits before tax and exceptional items of £14.1m in the 52 weeks to 28 December, compared with £22.6m in 1996. Earnings per share fell to 6.06p from 12.69p, while the final dividend increased to 2.5p from 2.4p.

"It is all to do with the strength of sterling," David Joll, managing director, said yesterday. "Were it not for the currency rates, our profits would have topped our record year in 1996. It's entirely to do with sterling."

Mr Matthews, who chairs the group, said sales of overseas subsidiaries, up 14 per cent, and a broadening of the business base through the

development of the brand name had buoyed the company.

"UK sales of branded added-value products were 8 per cent higher than in the previous year and produced another record profit," he said.

"Our trading conditions in Hungary improved in the second half of 1997 through a combination of lower raw material costs and the opening of our new feed mill. Our German and New Zealand operations show promise for the future but the French market remains difficult," he said.

Mr Joll said the drop in feed prices augured well for 1998. "The price of wheat is extremely important to us and the price is down significantly now. It's a little early to point to numbers, but the year-to-year sales are up in the first 12 weeks."

Mr Joll said the company expects to regain lost ground through new product launches, a more extensive advertising campaign, and further reductions in operating costs.

House of Fraser shares leap as profits double

SHARES in House of Fraser rebounded yesterday after the department store group reported a near doubling of profits last year. The retailer, which has 51 stores, reported pre-tax profits after exceptional items of £28.3m in the 53 weeks to 31 January, up 91 per cent from the previous year and within analysts' expectations.

Its shares surged by almost 10 per cent, closing up 14.5p at 170p after a poor performance so far this year. The shares last week fell to 150p, their lowest level for over a year.

The retailer is in the middle of a big recovery programme to improve profits after struggling since the Fayed brothers, owners of Harrods, floated it in

1994 at 180p a share. Profits before exceptional items were £29m against a loss last time of £38.4m. Sales rose to £812m from £781.4m. The dividend was held at 5.5p a share.

Brian McGowan, chairman, said the company had been successful in meeting its targets and expected to continue this progress in the current year.

"We are confident both of maintaining good sales growth in the current year and of achieving further increases in gross margin and gross profit," Mr McGowan said.

Retail analysts said the leap in the share price was more of a reaction to positive comments by the group on current trading. "The shares have bounced be-

cause of the reassurance on current trading," said Nick Bubb, retail analyst at SG Securities.

John Coleman, chief executive, said the group's performance showed the recovery was on track. "I would like to point out that our womenswear sales were up 20 per cent last year. We are very confident about how our fashion wear is trading right now." House of Fraser's own-bought fashions, as opposed to branded concessions, were up 11.6 per cent.

Mr Coleman said the reopening in late April of the revamped Barkers department store in Kensington, London would usher in House of Fraser's move into the next century.

— Agencies

Tarmac 'nervous' on transport

TARMAC, the heavy building materials and construction group, yesterday voiced "nervousness" over the Government's transport policy.

Neville Simms, Tarmac chief executive, said the group had moved increasingly towards building up a road and rail maintenance business to cope with the decline in new road building and the increasing emphasis on public transport.

"Maintenance work will be a key factor in profitability growth in future. It should account for £500m of our turnover this year after around £400m in 1997. It's a higher margin business and lower risk," he said.

Mr Simms said he was optimistic for 1998 and beyond, despite what he called "a little bit of nervousness" about the Government's roads policy.

His comments came as Tarmac announced higher-than-expected annual results and said it was on course for more growth on the back of buoyant markets in Britain, the US and continental Europe.

"1997 was a year of considerable further progress. This



Neville Simms: Optimistic

year has started well and I am confident that, whatever uncertainties lie ahead for the British economy, our strategic direction and clear objectives will deliver an improved performance in 1998 and beyond," he said.

Tarmac, one of the leading road developers and now building a rail maintenance business, raised pre-tax profit by 59 per cent last year to £120.2m on a 4 per cent rise in sales to £2.77bn. The total dividend was raised to 5.65p from 5.5p previously.

The profit figure outstripped market expectations by around

£4m while the dividend was marginally higher than forecast.

"January and February have been relatively kind months. More importantly, we've started to put price increases into the market and we hope they will stick this year as they have done pretty well for the last four or five years," Mr Simms said.

He said the construction market continued to improve while medium-term growth prospects for the US were favourable and steady growth was likely to continue in continental Europe.

He attributed Tarmac's profit rise to improved operating performance, cost-cutting and the industry's rationalisation.

The company was likely to take on more workers this year in what he called a benign, sustainable market.

Tarmac said its heavy building materials division, which accounts for slightly more than 40 per cent of group turnover, saw operating profit rise almost 20 per cent to £141.6m on a 6 per cent sales rise to £1.19bn.

— Reuters

Recommended final cash offer by Albert E Sharp on behalf of Skayfeast Limited for UK Safety plc

Albert E Sharp ("AES") announces on behalf of Skayfeast Limited ("Skayfeast") that by means of a formal offer document dated and posted on 25 March 1998 ("the Offer Document") and by means of this advertisement, AES is making a recommended offer ("the Offer") on behalf of Skayfeast to acquire all of the issued and to be issued share capital of UK Safety plc ("UK Safety"). Skayfeast has acquired from the Schroder UK Buy Out Fund and the Schroder UK Buy Out Fund II their entire holdings of 7,542,619 and 3,069,061 UK Safety shares representing, in aggregate, approximately 26.28 per cent of UK Safety's issued share capital. In addition Skayfeast has received from John Newman (UK Safety's Chief Executive) and Paul Cockburn (UK Safety's Production Director) irrevocable undertakings to accept the Offer in respect of their respective holdings of 101,547 and 4,834 UK Safety shares representing approximately 0.26 per cent in aggregate of the existing issued share capital of UK Safety.

Terms defined in the Offer Document have the same meaning in this advertisement.

Subject to the Offer becoming or being declared wholly unconditional, a UK Safety shareholder who validly accepts the Offer will receive 2.5 pence in cash for each UK Safety share.

The Offer, which is final and will not be increased, values all of the issued and to be issued share capital of UK Safety at approximately £1.01 million. The Offer represents a discount of approximately 66.7 per cent to the closing middle market price of 7.5 pence per UK Safety share on 19 March 1998, the last business day prior to the date of the announcement of the Offer.

The full terms and conditions of the Offer (including details of how the Offer may be accepted) are set out in the Offer Document and the Form of Acceptance.

UK Safety shareholders who accept the Offer may rely only on the Offer Document and the Form of Acceptance for all the terms and conditions of the Offer.

The Offer is by means of this advertisement being extended to all persons to whom the Offer Document may not be dispatched who hold or who are entitled to have allotted or issued to them UK Safety shares. Such persons are informed that copies of the Offer Document and Form of Acceptance are available for collection (during normal business hours) from Albert E Sharp of Pinners Hall, 105-108 Old Broad Street, London EC2N 1ET.

The Offer, which has been made by means of the Offer Document and this advertisement will be open for acceptance until 3.00pm on 15 April 1998 (or such later time(s) and/or date(s) as Skayfeast may, subject to the rules of the City Code, decide).

The Independent Directors of UK Safety, who have been advised by KPMG Corporate Finance, consider that the Offer is in the best interests of UK Safety shareholders and unanimously recommend all UK Safety shareholders to accept the Offer as they intend to do in respect of their own beneficial holdings of 166,000 UK Safety shares representing approximately 0.4 per cent of UK Safety's issued share capital. In providing advice to the Independent Directors, KPMG Corporate Finance has taken into account the Independent Directors' commercial assessments. John Newman and Paul Cockburn, together with Ken Blake (UK Safety's Marketing Director) have agreed, subject to the Offer being declared unconditional, to subscribe for equity in Skayfeast and have not, therefore, participated in the Independent Directors' recommendation.

The Offer is not being made, directly or indirectly, in or into the United States, Canada, Australia or Japan or by use of the mails or by any means or instrumentality of interstate or foreign commerce or of any facilities of a national securities exchange of the United States, Canada, Australia or Japan.

This advertisement is not being published in or otherwise distributed or sent in or into the United States, Canada, Australia or Japan and persons reading this advertisement (including custodians, trustees and nominees) must not distribute or send this advertisement, the Offer Document or the Form of Acceptance (nor any related documents) in or into or from the United States, Canada, Australia or Japan nor use the mails or any means or instrumentality of interstate or foreign commerce or of any facilities of a national securities exchange of the United States, Canada, Australia or Japan for any purpose, directly or indirectly, in connection with the Offer and doing so will invalidate any related purported acceptances of the Offer.

This advertisement is published on behalf of Skayfeast by AES and has been approved by AES solely for the purpose of section 57 of the Financial Services Act 1986.

AES, which is regulated by the Securities and Futures Authority is acting exclusively for Skayfeast in connection with the Offer and no-one else and will not be responsible to anyone other than Skayfeast for providing the protections afforded to customers of AES nor for providing advice in relation to the Offer.

KPMG Corporate Finance, a division of KPMG, which is authorised to carry out investment business by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, is acting exclusively for UK Safety in connection with the Offer and no-one else and will not be responsible to anyone other than UK Safety for providing the protections afforded to customers of KPMG Corporate Finance nor for providing advice in relation to the Offer.

The director of Skayfeast and the directors and Alchemy Partners (Göteborg) (which manages the Alchemy Investment Plan, which is investing in Skayfeast) accept responsibility for the information contained in this advertisement other than the recommendation of the Independent Directors. The Independent Directors accept responsibility for their recommendation in this advertisement. To the best of the knowledge and belief of these respective parties (having taken all reasonable care to ensure that such is the case) the information contained in this advertisement for which they are respectively responsible is in accordance with the facts and does not omit anything likely to affect the import of such information.

26 March 1998

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY ANDREW YATES

Barratt builds on housing recovery

BARRATT's results wouldn't be the same without an outburst against the Government. Now Sir Lawrence Barratt, the old war horse of the housing industry, has stepped down, it was left up to Frank Eaton, his successor, to have a rant at how house buyers are being victimised by the powers that be. But Barratt has little to complain about.

The housing market is going great guns at the moment. Mortgage interest tax relief may go and interest rates will probably rise further. However, houses are more affordable now than they have been for some time. The Government's prudent stance on the economy have seen long-term interest rates fall to new lows, stimulating out-price deals from lenders.

When Sir Lawrence stepped down last time the company promptly went downhill as the recession brought the industry to its knees. But history is unlikely to repeat itself.

The industry is still cyclical and will struggle to grow at the cracking pace it has set over the last few years. That said, as long as the economy does not get out of control, the housing market should continue to grow at, say, 3 to 4 per cent a year.

Barratt has capitalised on the good times by expanding its presence in the South-east, which has shown by far the fastest growth in the UK. Just as importantly, it has been able to keep costs under control.

Wage demands and land costs have ballooned over the last 12 months but Barratt has proved better than most at keeping a lid on expenses. That helped profits for the six months to December rise 38 per cent to £34.1m.

Barratt remains one of the best run businesses in the sector. Barratt is on track to build 8,000 homes in this financial year and maintain its double-digit volume growth. That means, barring the sort of crash last seen in the early 1990s, Barratt looks set fair for the next few years.

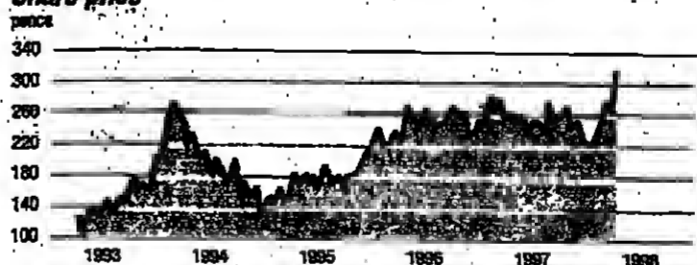
Barratt's shares and the house building sector have both staged a comeback over the last few months. The shares rose another 13p to 319p yesterday. Analysts forecast full-year profits of £90m, putting the shares on

Barratt: At a glance

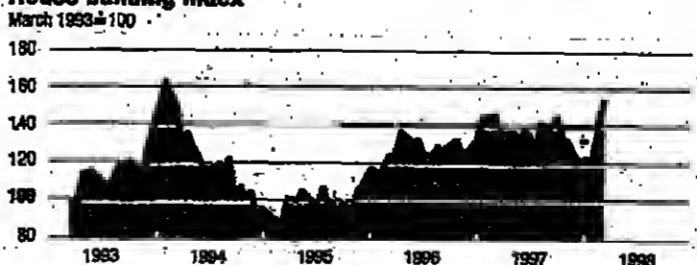
Market value: £730m, share price 319p (+13p)

Five-year record	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Turnover (£m)	579	634	714	311	388
Pre-tax profits (£m)	47.1	52.1	70.1	24.8	34.1
Earnings per share (p)	15.2	17.8	19.8	7.0	10.0
Dividends per share (p)	7.10	8.25	8.0	2.0	3.3

Share price



House building index



Source: Cassa Research

a prospective price-earnings ratio of 12. Some housing stocks are beginning to look a bit pricey but Barratt remains good value.

Sportswear boom could be over

IS IT time to call the turn on sports retailers? Companies like JJB Sports and Blacks Leisure have enjoyed exponential growth on the back of the popularity of replica football shirts and the power of brands like Nike, Reebok and Adidas. But clouds have begun to gather on the horizon just as things should have been looking sunny in the run-up to the World Cup. Nike issued a profits warn-

ing last week and though the problems are mostly in the US and the Far East, over-supply is causing in price cutting everywhere. This is bound to have a knock-on effect on UK retailers, who are pawns in a much more powerful game.

Demand here does seem to have faltered. Sports Division, the privately owned retailer, is delaying its decision on the timing of its float and share prices have been falling. JJB shares have lost 18 per cent of their value since their peak just three weeks ago. On top of all this, the former merchandise director of Manchester United has said the replica sales boom may be over.

With the huge store opening programmes being undertaken, the market is clearly more difficult. The question now is whether this is just a dip or the beginning of the end of this particular fashion.

The next news will be JJB Sports' full-year results next month. With analysts expecting profits of £34.5m the shares trade on a forward rating of 20 times. This is far higher than Blacks Leisure, which has a wider spread of interests, and JJB Sports, which has been affected by profits warnings. The World Cup may provide a boost but, with higher interest rates affecting consumer spending and the threat of a shift in fashions, investors should proceed with caution. There is a case for locking in profits.

Marketing boost for Abbott Mead

ADVERTISING is a notoriously cyclical business. When economic conditions deteriorate, a finance director's knife becomes magnetically attracted to the advertising budget.

In the last six years, advertisers have seen their business grow without so much as a blip. But it is debatable if the boom times can last much longer.

Unlike its rivals in Madison Avenue, Abbott Mead Vickers lacks the global reach which could protect it from a downturn in the domestic economy. So, it has switched to other devices.

In the three years since 1994, the advertiser has, in effect, switched from being an advertising company that does marketing to being a marketing company that does advertising. Whereas marketing brought in just 39 per cent of profits in 1994, it now brings in 59 per cent.

Because marketing—such as PR, design, literature and packaging—is less cyclical than advertising and less likely to be brutalised by recession, this should reassure shareholders.

Abbott Mead Vickers has maintained its position as the largest advertising company in the UK, and is likely to stay that way for a while. New business went well in 1997, with the company winning contracts with Aer Lingus, Volvo and BT Business Communications.

Earnings in the year to December 1997 were ahead of expectations at 17.3p a share and Pannure Gordino forecasts 19p a share for this year. The shares yesterday rose from 386p to 402.5p, valuing the group at £290m. This puts in on a multiple of 21—much lower than many of its peers. Worth a punt.



OUTLOOK ON THE PANTOMIME OF QUALIFYING FOR EMU. PROPOSALS TO REGULATE UTILITIES, THE DILEMMA OVER RAILTRACK, AND ARGOS'S MAKEOVER

Erm, here's a piece of Euro-fudge to chew on

BACK in the 1970s Britain was the basket case of Europe. Rigid labour markets, an overweening state sector, high inflation and a tax and spend mentality. You name it, we had it. Then Mrs Thatcher came along and the painful process of readjustment began. Just as the experiment was about to succeed she was lured into the Exchange Rate Mechanism. Two years later Thatcherism was dead and the country was in the grip of a deep recession. The climb back to recovery only began the day Norman Lamont sang in his path, Britain left the ERM and the pound underwent a competitive devaluation.

It is easy to see why the present government is wary of re-entering a fixed exchange rate system. The 1990s-style Britain could walk into Economic and Monetary Union tomorrow but it will not, indeed cannot, because the accompanying reduction in interest rates would blow the lid off the economy.

Eleven other European countries have no such qualms, however. Yesterday they were duly declared fit and proper members of the single currency after a classic piece of Euro-fudge.

The architect of the project, the European Commission, has chosen to ignore the fact that two of the founder members, Italy and Belgium, have debt to GDP ratios that make the eyes water. They are double those permitted under the Maastricht convergence criteria. That spells pain to the people if they are to keep within the limits of deficit to GDP at the same time as servicing their debt.

Likewise plucky little Finland is being welcomed into the euro-fold even though it has not been in the ERM for the req-

uired two year period whereas the Swedes, who do not want to be in the first wave anyway, are not being admitted because they are not ERM members at all.

Gordon Brown reassures that Britain has no intention of re-joining the ERM. Brussels meanwhile talks tough about membership being a necessary pre-cursor to joining the single currency.

But as yesterday's pantomime shows, qualifying for entry depends more on having the political will than meeting the convergence criteria. If and when Britain chooses to sign up, some other fudge will be found to smooth the way. The question is whether, by then, it will want to join the sort of club that would have it as a member.

A mechanism for future errors

AFTER nine months and as many draft versions, the Government's proposals for regulating the privatised utilities have finally emerged blinking into the daylight. There are precious few surprises. Nevertheless, the confirmation that Margaret Beckett is not about to tear up the system of incentive regulation which governs the water, gas, electricity and telecoms industries put a spring into share prices yesterday.

As in so many other areas of policy, the realities of office make it hard to deliver on the rhetoric while in opposition. Old Labour would dearly have loved to settle some scores with the privatised utility bosses by squeezing them until the pips squeaked. New Labour, the natural party of business, accepts that imperfect as the

system may be, the best way to improve the consumer's lot is to give the utilities an incentive to make profits.

The Treasury's paw marks can be seen all over the Green Paper, particularly in the decision to leave the RPI-X formula as the basis for price regulation. But there is one weasel phrase that will need careful monitoring and that is the proposed "error correction mechanism". The purpose of this, we are promised, is to claw back profits only where the wool has been pulled over the regulator's eyes or where surplus profits are made unexpectedly.

But given the increased degree of political control over regulation which is evident elsewhere in the Green Paper, regulators may be tempted to reach for the mechanism too often.

The strings on Railtrack's deal

THE TWO LINES to plot on any graph of Railtrack's performance since privatisation are improvements in the rail network against share price movement. You do not need a train-spotter's eye for detail to see that the latter has outstripped the former by a country mile.

Shareholders have enjoyed a rollicking good ride unlike passengers as the figures for punctuality, reliability and quality of service are starting to show.

Now Railtrack is offering to make amends by increasing its 10-year rolling investment programme to £17bn and straighten out the bottlenecks. But the offer comes with strings attached - turn

the regulatory screw further and the extra spending will be in jeopardy. The timing is no coincidence since the Rail Regulator, John Swift, wants to make life tougher for Railtrack when access charges - the amount the train operating companies pay to use the network - are reviewed for the five-year period up to 2006.

Railtrack has another devil - that the current formula does not allow it to reap benefits from any growth in the market, the Conservatives having privatised the railways on the assumption that they would then stagnate. Rather than doing ad hoc deals, such as the revenue sharing deal struck with Virgin Trains on the West Coast Mainline, Railtrack wants some mechanism built into the regime to reflect what it says could be 30 per cent passenger growth and a tripling of freight traffic over the next decade.

All in all, the regulator and his political master John Prescott are in an awkward spot. Their hearts may tell them to punish Railtrack's shareholders for having enjoyed a free ride but their heads will conclude this is not the best means of achieving a modern railway. The clincher may be Mr Prescott's dependence on Railtrack to rescue the Channel Tunnel Rail Link and modernise the Tube. No wonder Sir Bob Horton's beaming features are even more noticeable on the footplate than usual.

First taste of Argos's defence

FOR A retailer that never seems to have moved out of the 1970s, Argos has suddenly come over all designer trendy.

Instead of its usual grey presentations the company yesterday hired the London Weekend Television studios in regale audiences with its new retail strategy. There were lots of yellow kettles and bright red vacuum cleaners everywhere and, up on the podium, new chief executive Stuart Rose was reading from his autograph with all the aplomb of a seasoned Oscars presenter. Amazing what a hostile bid can do.

But strip away the gloss and the key issue is how much Argos's new "vision" will add to the share price compared to the cash offer Great Universal Stores has tabled.

Certainly, much of yesterday's thinking was common sense and is what GUS would probably do given the chance. Spending £5m on giving the stores and catalogue a makeover to make them more user-friendly seems sensible. Adding a wider range of goods - including more at higher price points - increases consumer choice. And selling additional lines such as greeting cards, wrapping paper and videos in the stores could add extra revenue.

The issue is surely just the appetiser. The real meat will come next week with the defence document. Mr Rose has pledged to increase margins by a full percentage point over two years. On some calculations this could add over 70p to the share price. The promise of a special dividend next week could turn what has been a dull bid into a decent fight. But Argos is still relying on its shareholders making a leap of faith. And it will take more than a slick presentation to get them on board.

Barratt hits at housing policy

By Andrew Yates

FRANK EATON, chairman of Barratt, one of the largest housebuilders in the country, yesterday launched a stinging attack on the Labour Government. He accused Tony Blair, the Prime Minister, of ignoring the needs of first-time buyers by continuing to reduce the level of Miras, the tax relief on mortgage payments.

Mr Eaton said yesterday: "The Government is discriminating against the first-time buyer. If this continues it will force more young people into renting instead of home ownership."

Barratt is calling on Labour to provide more subsidies for first-time buyers. It believes the five interest-rate hikes since Labour came to power will have a particularly damaging effect on less affluent parts of the country.

The company also criticised the current planning system, which it believes is in desperate need of an overhaul. Planning permission can be delayed for at least 12 months in some cases. "The Government has failed to tackle the planning system, which has broken down," Mr Eaton said. A shortage of land has seen prices soar by a quarter over the last 12 months.

The outburst came as Barratt warned that the housing market was likely to slow this year after a rapid period of growth. Barratt said current house sales were the highest the group had seen for more than a decade, prompting comparisons with the housing boom of the 1980s.

The strong housing market helped the group achieve a 38 per cent rise in pre-tax profits to £34.1m last year, thanks to a 10 per cent rise in prices in the South-east, where Barratt has often concentrated its new investment.

However, Mr Eaton warned the price of new homes in Lon-

don and the Home Counties would come off the boil this year, rising by around only 3 or 4 per cent. Barratt also believes that the strong growth in the South-east is unlikely to ripple out to the rest of the country. According to the group, the housing market in the North of England is likely to remain relatively depressed with prices edging up by 2 or 3 per cent this year.

Barratt now builds 45 per cent of its houses in the South of England and that proportion will continue to rise.

The group plans to sell 8,000 houses this year and is on track to meet its target of 11,000 sales in the year 2000. Building costs

rose 2 per cent last year as wage pressures from contractors subsided. Barratt forecasts a 3 per cent rise this year.

Mr Eaton yesterday moved to strengthen the group's board by appointing David Pretty, the chairman of Barratt's Southern Region, as managing director. The management shake-up comes after Sir Lawrie Barratt, the group's former chairman, took a back seat role at the group by retiring as chairman last November to become life president.

The results beat analysts' expectations, causing Barratt's shares to rise 13p to 319p. Investment columns, page 24

Former BZW chief earned £5m for 13 months' work

By Lea Paterson

THE FORMER head of investment banking at Barclays benefited from a package worth almost £1.5m last year, taking his total benefits for 13 months work at the bank to more than £5m.

The 1997 package made Bill Harrison - formerly chief executive of BZW, Barclays' investment banking arm - Barclays' highest paid director for the second year in a row.

Barclays' annual report, posted to shareholders yesterday, revealed Mr Harrison received a

basic salary of £250,000 in 1997 as well as a payment of £946,000 largely relating to his departure from the bank last October. Barclays also contributed £275,000 to Mr Harrison's pension.

Next week, the former BZW chief will also be able to exercise 132,304 share options granted to him in 1996. At current market prices, Mr Harrison's options are worth around £1.1m.

Mr Harrison - who joined the bank in September 1996 - resigned his post just 13 months later after the Barclays board decided to put BZW's equity

and corporate finance businesses up for sale.

In 1996, the former BZW chief received a package worth almost £5m.

Martin Taylor, Barclays' chief executive, received £758,000 in salaries and bonuses last year, a fall of 10 per cent. Mr Taylor was provisionally awarded £238,000 of shares under the bank's "executive share award scheme" - this is a deferred award which can be partially collected in 2001. He also has been provisionally awarded 35,000 share options under the bank's longer-term incentive scheme.

Barings shake-up may hit 200 jobs

By Lea Paterson

ING Barings is to close its emerging markets equity derivatives division. The division employs around 200 people, most of whom are based in London.

ING - the Dutch bank which rescued Barings after the Nick Leeson scandal - said yesterday that not all 200 equity derivatives staff would lose their jobs. The bank declined to give further details of the number of the jobs at risk, although a source said "the majority" of the employees would probably be let go over the coming months.

The decision to close the emerging markets equity derivatives division follows a three-month strategic review, according to a memorandum distributed to staff on Tuesday.

ING Barings is not withdrawing completely from the equity derivatives business - it will continue to run an operation out of Amsterdam.

In the staff memo, Arjum Mathrani, ING Barings' chief executive, tried to reassure staff that the group was committed to corporate and investment banking, saying recent concerns had been "unfounded". It had been rumoured ING Barings was considering pulling out of investment banking altogether, and tension within the bank was heightened after cuts in the bank's Latin American and Asian divisions last month.

The latest cuts reflects the group's decision to focus on Western Europe and the US. ING Barings is to restructure its business into three divisions: equities/investment banking; treasury; and emerging markets, high-yield debt and derivatives.

Jeremy Palmer will head up the equities/investment banking division. Richie Prager and Jose Berenguer will be co-heads of emerging markets, high-yield debt and derivatives and Ted de Vries will head up the treasury division.

Trade unions attack Midlands decision to reject RBS bid

TRADE UNIONS yesterday urged Birmingham Midshires to rethink its decision to reject Royal Bank of Scotland's bid of between £60m and £630m. The board of Midshires said on Tuesday it could not recommend the bid and urged Royal Bank to release it from an exclusivity agreement that stops it talking to other bidders. Halifax has offered £780m, giving members an extra £150 each in windfall payments. Unlike Royal Bank, which guarantees that jobs and branches will be kept for three years, Halifax has made no such pledges. Rob MacGregor, assistant secretary of Bifu, the finance union, said: "Jobs and services must be the central issue - not the size of payout to members. It's important that Birmingham Midshires thinks again."

Ofgas backs doorstep selling

PEOPLE who change their gas supplier find doorstep selling "useful and informative", Ofgas, the gas industry regulator, said. Ofgas said a Mori survey of householders in phase 2b of gas competition (Kent, East and West Sussex) found that 83 per cent of those who had switched to a new supplier had been contacted on the doorstep. The survey found price was the main reason for switching.

Rexam delays payout

REXAM, the packaging products group, has delayed paying a final dividend to shareholders for another 12 months in order to get round the abolition of advance corporation tax (ACT) in April 1999. Rexam has a surplus ACT on its balance sheet of £23m which it is "anxious to utilise" before ACT ends. It proposes deferring the final 1997 dividend until next April and enhancing it by 8.7 per cent to 6.5p for late payment.

Vaux offers £20m for Manor

VAUX Group, the regional brewer and hotelier, has made a recommended offer to buy Manor Hotels for a total of £20m, including £3m of debt and net current liabilities. Manor owns three hotels with 267 bedrooms, in Ipswich, Norwich and Old Harlow. Manor's turnover in the year to 31 December was around £9m.

Sears forms joint venture

SEARS Financial Services, the store card unit of retail group Sears, has formed a joint venture company with Equifax, the US transactions processing company, to develop credit card and store card processing services in the UK. The joint venture will be 51 per cent owned by Equifax and 49 per cent by Sears Financial Services, known as SearsCard. It will use SearsCard's established business base to offer processing services to third parties in the UK.

Go-ahead for Bass pub sale

MARGARET BECKETT, the President of the Board of Trade, has decided not to refer the proposed acquisition by Punch Taverns Investments of 1,428 pubs from Bass to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Norweb develops DPL

NORWEB DPL, the joint venture of Northern Telecom and United Utilities' unit Norweb Communications, has signed agreements with 10 international utilities which have committed themselves to proceeding with initial market deployment of Digital Power-Line technology. Norweb said the potential market for DPL is more than 35 million homes in seven European and Asian countries.

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- 32x MAX CD-ROM
- 512K Pipeline burst cache
- 14" SVGA colour screen (15" optional)
- 333 + VMT + 101.00 extra
- SP225 stereo speaker system
- Over 2000 software™ bundle including Windows 95
- 50 minute MSN Video trainer
- Year 2000 compliant
- ATX tower with all standard features
- 14 Day money back guarantee (excluding carriage costs)

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Legal & General

Source: Lloyds (1997/98). The gross yield of the Fixed Income Trust was 7.1% in 1997/98, compared with 6.8% in 1996/97. This performance is an indication of the quality of the assets held in the trust. The trust is a company limited by guarantee and is not a company. The assets of the trust are held in a separate account and are not available to the company. The trust is a company limited by guarantee and is not a company. The assets of the trust are held in a separate account and are not available to the company.

Water stocks rise as DTI plans are revealed

MARKET REPORT



PETER THAL LARSEN

It was hardly the response the Government hoped for. On the day Margaret Beckett, the President of the Board of Trade, unveiled the Government's consultation paper on the future of utility regulation, stocks in the water sector soared. Not quite the consumer-friendly message that the spin doctors would have wanted to send.

In fact, the two events were not directly linked. The gushing water shares seemed to stem from a presentation to analysts by Thames Water on Tuesday, which played down fears that the entire sector was heading for a big confrontation with the regulator over the next price review.

Thames Water put on 28p to 1,025p, while Anglian Water ended the day up 24p at 930p. Hyder gained 15p to 777.5p and Severn Trent was 18p better at 1028p.

Multi-utility United Utilities gained ground on the

same factors, as well as the news that it had formalised its joint venture with electronics group Nortel to develop a technology which allows electricity wires to carry telephone calls and internet traffic. The shares gained 26p to 881p.

Meanwhile, other electricity and gas shares took the news that the Government wanted to merge their respective regulators - Ofwat and Ofgas - in their stride. BG, the most heavily regulated arm of the former British Gas, shaded 0.25p to 317.75p.

Of the few remaining electricity firms Southern Electric dipped 5.5p to 538p while National Power finished down 14p at 571p and PowerGen gave up 6p to 804p.

The Footsie continued to pause for breath after the headlong rush towards the 6,000 mark that marked most of the first quarter. Having seen their year-end forecasts for the index smashed within

weeks, most equity strategists are advocating caution as they decide where shares will head next. Despite briefly edging above 6,000 in the morning, the Footsie ended the day down 15.9 points at 5967.8.

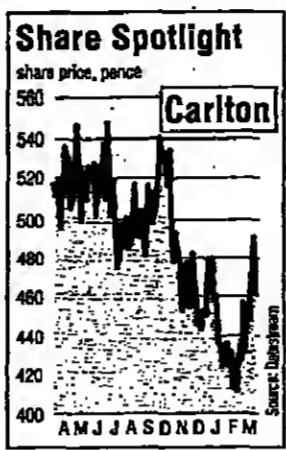
One notable casualty was Carlton Communications, which dipped 25p to 460p on a downgrade by NatWest. Analysts reckon first-half figures from Michael Green's media group will suffer from lower profits in Broadcast Television and a downturn on the Vision and Sound Products side.

The broker has also slashed its valuation of British Digital Broadcasting, Carlton's joint venture with Granada, to £200m from £920m on fears that programming costs will rise.

A "buy" recommendation from Dresdner Kleinwort Benson lifted shares in Boots 14.5p to 932.5. An upgrade from the same broker also boosted Sage, the accounting

software group, which put on 15p to 1352.5p.

Cable & Wireless dialled a 16.5p gain to 754p on rumours from France that it is about to sell its stake in French mobile operator Bouygues. Selling the holding, which is estimated to be worth about £600m, would go a long way to realising the £1bn of disposals targeted by C&W's



chief executive, Dick Brown. The bubble of bid speculation burst on hotels and betting group Ladbrokes, which tumbled 16p to 342p. Railtrack's £1.7bn investment programme got the thumbs up from the market, with the shares steaming ahead 43.5p to 1,033.5p.

Capital Radio tuned into an 18p gain to 700p ahead of City briefings next week. The company is preparing to update analysts on the performance of its restaurant division. The stock suffered last year after Capital bought the My Kinda Tunes restaurant chain, but has risen by 40 per cent so far this year.

Savoy's shares continued their retreat as the chances of a bid for the hotel group emerging in the near future receded. They closed down 13.5p at 1,665p, having peaked at 1,887.5p a few days ago.

Vickers, in the process of selling its Rolls-Royce luxury car unit, firmed 7.5p to 233p

as Volkswagen confirmed it had put in a bid. Catalogue retailer Argos fired another salvo in its defence against a \$70p share hostile bid from rival GUS, and was rewarded with a 13p share price hike to 620p. GUS eased 2p to 777p.

A stronger-than-expected set of final results from House of Fraser boosted the shares 14.5p to 170p. Less than six months ago, they peaked at 228.5p.

Shares in supermarket group Sainsbury's dipped 2p to 343.5p as Dairy Farm, the Hong-Kong based food retailer, confirmed that it had placed its 11 per cent stake, pocketing a cool £279m (£167m) in the process.

Upbeat figures from Barlast, the country's largest housebuilder, pushed its shares up 13p to 319p and gave the rest of the sector a fillip. Bovis Homes put on 6p to 270p while minnow Linden, also reporting results, added 13p to 199.5p.

TAKING STOCK

SHIRE Pharmaceuticals, marketing and licensing prescription drugs, lifted the recent gloom over the biotech sector with a 45.5p rise to 409p. Shire cleared a stock overhang by offering a global share offering which included listing on Nasdaq, the US market for hi-tech stocks. Shire offered 21 million shares at 343p, raising £7.2m. In the past year, the shares have soared by close to 90 per cent.

OVER on AIM, hotel minnow Peel Hotels added 7p to 97.5p. The project, which owns the Bull Hotel in Peterborough, has had a better reception than the last time Robert Peel ventured on to the stock market as chief executive of Thistle Hotels. There he was forced out by institutional shareholders after a disappointing share price performance following Rotation. But shares in Peel Hotels have risen by 60 per cent since coming to the market at 60.5p a week ago.

52 week	High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	PE Code
Alcoholic Beverages							
45.45	45.45	45.45	Adnoca	45.45	+0.10	12	100
40.20	40.20	40.20	Beck's	40.20	+0.10	12	100
40.20	40.20	40.20	Beck's	40.20	+0.10	12	100
40.20	40.20	40.20	Beck's	40.20	+0.10	12	100
40.20	40.20	40.20	Beck's	40.20	+0.10	12	100
40.20	40.20	40.20	Beck's	40.20	+0.10	12	100
40.20	40.20	40.20	Beck's	40.20	+0.10	12	100
40.20	40.20	40.20	Beck's	40.20	+0.10	12	100
40.20	40.20	40.20	Beck's	40.20	+0.10	12	100
40.20	40.20	40.20	Beck's	40.20	+0.10	12	100

52 week	High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	PE Code
Breweries Pubs & Rest.							
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100

52 week	High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	PE Code
Building/Construction							
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
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100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100

52 week	High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	PE Code
Building Materials							
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
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100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100

52 week	High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	PE Code
Chemicals							
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
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100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100

52 week	High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	PE Code
Distributors							
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100

52 week	High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	PE Code
Diversified Industrials							
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
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100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100

52 week	High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	PE Code
Electricity							
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
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100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100

52 week	High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	PE Code
Food Producers							
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
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100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100

52 week	High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	PE Code
Gas Distribution							
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
100.00	100.00	100.00	Beck's	100.00	+0.10	12	100
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The heavyweight division doesn't seem to be going anywhere

ONE thing about boxing upon which observers of my vintage are fully in agreement is that the heavyweight division has not been in worse shape since Floyd Patterson held the undisputed championship.

If this seems a bit hard on Patterson who defeated Archie Moore for the vacant title 42 years ago, and took it back from Ingemar Johansson before a one-round loss to Sonny Liston, he is stuck with the fact of being sent over 21 times in 13 championship contests.

Because of disadvantages in weight and punch resistance Patterson would be no less vulnerable today but the comparison is not between now and the time of his fragile ascendancy. It is with the era that

followed, one referred to as the "Golden Era" of heavyweight boxing.

There are plenty of names to support the belief that the division has never been better represented than it was in the '60s and '70s by such notable champions as Muhammad Ali, Joe Frazier, George Foreman and Larry Holmes. The supporting cast of Ken Norton, Jimmy Young, Earnie Shavers and others provided plenty of excitement, too.

In generational conflict it is probably felt that older sportswriters are naturally perverse, and admiration is wrong from us only by the supreme artistry of a particularly good performance. But the present parlous state of affairs entitles us to suppose that no sporting enterprise

has gone into greater decline than heavyweight boxing.

Mike Tyson remains the most marketable figure in the division but is under suspension by the Nevada boxing authorities holding no guarantee that his licence will be restored this summer. Tyson, who is also involved in an attempt to split from Don King and his co-managers, John Horne and Rory Holloway, has no more than a couple of contests left and may already be finished.

With no clear prospect of a unifying contest between the leading title-holders, Evander Holyfield (World Boxing Association) and Lennox Lewis (World Boxing Council) there is now the squalid possi-



KEN JONES

bility that Foreman and Holmes will be resurrected to meet in the year of their 50th birthdays.

Thought up as a pay-per-view event by Harold Smith, who served time for embezzlement, it could be worth \$10m (£6.2m) to Foreman against \$4m for Holmes. "If they

come up with the money I'll do it," Holmes said this week.

News like that adds to the frustration felt by Lewis as he prepares to make a mandatory defence of the WBC crown against Shannon Briggs in Atlantic City on Saturday.

"Briggs definitely wasn't on my agenda," Lewis said. "To prove you are the best you have to fight who is thought to be the best which is why I wanted Holyfield. It didn't happen so I've just got to keep going until the situation changes."

Briggs got his chance through a controversial points decision over Foreman last November. Briggs said that Foreman's jab was the stiffest he has felt. "Yet," said Lewis. The lowest point in Lewis's career

came in September 1994 when he lost the WBC title to Oliver McCall on a second-round knockout. "Looking back, that defeat turned things around for me," he added. "It got me together with Emanuel Steward and he's taken off the rough edges. Losing to McCall took a great weight off my shoulders. It gave me a different attitude. I'd lost focus. But I thought, 'I can't go out like this'."

Lewis's last three victories were over McCall, who didn't want to fight, Henry Akinwande, disqualified for holding, and Andrew Golota, who offered no opposition when knocked out in the opening round.

Because Lewis did not take exploit McCall's obvious disqualification and made no great effort to shake

up Akinwande he is still striving to make a reputation in the United States. "Unfortunately, none of those guys, Golota included, performed the roles I wanted from them or that the public wanted," he said.

Trouble is that the heavyweight division, ridden as ever with promotional intrigue, doesn't appear to be going anywhere. This week, Lewis versus Briggs, who may, or may not, be a credible contender. In June, Holyfield must face the discredited Akinwande in defence of the WBA title before putting up the IBF crown against the anonymous Vaughn Bean.

History suggests that someone will come along. It had better happen otherwise heavyweight boxing will become a belly laugh or nothing.



Venus Williams hits a forehand during her win over Italy's Silvia Farina in Key Biscayne. She now meets Martina Hingis in the semi-finals

Photograph: Jon Ferry/Allsport

Henman's confident advance

Tennis

By John Roberts
in Key Biscayne

A WEEK of outstanding tennis continued for Tim Henman yesterday when he advanced to the semi-finals of the Lipton Championships, having left two current Grand Slam champions in his wake. The confidence which has grown with every match since Henman arrived in Florida was abundant as he swept past the Brazilian Gustavo "Guga" Kuerten, the French Open champion, 6-2, 6-4 in only 65 minutes.

Henman's win against Petr Korda, the Australian Open champion and world No 2, in the previous round was impressive for the way the Briton unnerved his opponent, who was on the brink of rising to replace Peter Sampras as the world No 1. That victory was achieved after Henman had made a shaky start. Against Kuerten, his stylish serve-and-volley style augmented by shrewd play from the back court, rattled the Brazilian's self-belief from the start on the Centre Court.

Henman, who has not dropped a set so far, will play either Marcelo Rios, the No 3 seed, who would overtake Sampras by winning the title, or Sweden's Thomas Enqvist.

The volatile Jeff Tarango blames Andre Agassi for giving him a bad name. "He told people that I made him cry," the Californian said on the eve of their quarter-final at the Lipton Championships here. "That was just to try to start a bad reputation for me, I think."

At the time of the incident, during a tournament in San Diego, Tarango was eight years old, Agassi seven. Tarango was the winner. "I've never beaten Andre in the pros," he said. "The only time I beat him was the first time we played, in a tie-breaker. He got overruled on match point and he started crying."

"He told a different story before I turned pro in Livingston [in 1988]. He said that I made him cry. I don't think he remembers it correctly, because I have plenty of witnesses that saw him get overruled on that match point."

Whatever the rights and wrongs of that childhood meeting, the story is a microcosm of

Tarango's stormy career. The 29-year-old's chief claim to fame was his disqualification at Wimbledon after walking out of a match following a row with the French umpire Bruno Rebeuh, who was slapped by Tarango's wife, Benedicte, on his way to the referee's room.

Tarango insists that he does not bear a grudge against Agassi for triggering a chain reaction of misunderstandings. "That's just the way it goes," he said. "It's so long ago, who really cares? It was a tough match. I still remember it to this day. Back then, nobody could hit winners. You just kept moonballing the ball back and forth. I remember him hitting some lobs so well that I was scraping my racket against the fence trying to get it back."

Agassi, a three-times Lipton champion who has raised his world ranking from No 141 to No 31 since the turn of the year, has won all six of his matches against Tarango in straight sets since they started to play for money.

Tarango, ranked No 61, overcame Yevgeny Kafelnikov, the No 6 seed, in three sets in the previous round, the Russian smashing his racket in frustration at the end of the match, Tarango picking it up and holding it aloft to the crowd as a victory trophy.

Agassi, having advanced against the Spaniard Albert Costa, 7-6, 4-6, 6-1, said he was looking forward to playing Tarango for the first time since Montreal in 1995. "Jeff has been playing extremely well. He presents different concerns than my last opponent. He doesn't move as well as Costa, but he certainly hits a big ball both sides. Being a lefty, he hits a flat ball. I've got to be willing to step it up against him. You know, it's nice to see him doing well. He's been working hard. You can tell it's paid off."

The latest instalment of Martina Hingis versus the Williams sisters takes place in the semi-finals of the women's singles. The Swiss world No 1 renews her rivalry with Venus, having edged through her first tussle with the younger Serena in the quarter-finals.

Pat Cash, the 1987 Wimbledon champion when he beat Ivan Lendl, has succumbed to a long list of injuries and announced he will retire from the game. Cash, 32, said yesterday that he would announce his retirement "in the next couple of days".

Tiger stands in way of Els

Golf

By Andy Farrell

in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida

ERNIE ELS has the chance to replace Tiger Woods as the world No 1 by winning his second tournament in a week at the US Players' Championship, which starts here today.

While Woods works on peaking for the US Masters in two weeks' time, Els showed he is already in prime form by winning the Bay Hill Invitational last week, outscoring Woods by 12 strokes over the final two rounds.

But Els insisted: "Tiger should be regarded as the best player in the world. I am right

up there and there are a lot of other players right up there, but his record is awfully good. I think you can only judge how good a player he is by his performances in the big championships like the majors and this tournament."

The 25th Players' tournament has a first prize of \$720,000 (£445,000) and one of the best fields of the year. Its only drawback is that the first "official" major of the year follows in a fortnight.

That is not a problem for Colin Montgomerie, who has a better record at the TPC at Sawgrass than at Augusta National. Monty was second to Fred Couples two years ago and has not been worse than 14th in the

last four years. "This is as major a golf tournament as it gets," Montgomerie said. "I don't know who classifies these things, but if there were five majors this would be the fifth. There are certain shots that have to be hit on this course, and that plays into my hands."

A suggestion from John Daly for Woods and Fuzzy Zoeller, whose cross remarks about the Masters champion created a racial controversy that is still rumbling, to play a practice round at Augusta got a cautious welcome from Woods.

"It would be more of a public relations thing," Woods said. "I will be getting ready for a major. If Fuzzy wants to get ready for a major with me that's fine."

Sharks seek better spirit

Basketball

By Richard Taylor

JUST three weeks after winning the Uni-ball League Trophy, Sheffield Sharks' coach, Chris Finch, has blamed a lack of team spirit for a run of three defeats in four games which has knocked them out of contention for the Budweiser League title.

Sharks, who entertain second-placed Newcastle Eagles tomorrow, still have much to play for, though. Finch said: "We are trying to build up momentum for the play-offs. We need to come up with a better team spirit at the moment."

Tollett's crisis call

Rugby League

By Dave Hadfield

THE London Broncos plan to hire their former player Tilsen Tollett back on loan from Harlequins and in their side to meet Wigan in the Silk Cut Challenge Cup semi-final on Sunday.

Tollett, a Great Britain tourist in 1996, joined Quins last October, but could return to fill the problem stand-off position at Huddersfield.

Luke Goodwin is Cup-tied, Glen Aird has not yet staked a convincing claim to the position and the Broncos used their back-row forward, Peter Gill, there against Hull KR in the last round.

The London chief executive, Tony Rea, was in negotiations with Tollett and Harlequins last night and a Broncos spokesman said: "We are pretty confident."

The Leeds prop Barrie McDermott is to appear at a disciplinary hearing tomorrow, hoping to avoid a suspension that would rule him out of the Super League season after being sent off in a friendly at York last Friday.

A delegation from the Australian Rugby League, including its former director-general, Ken Arthurson, is flying into Britain this weekend to fight through the courts for £400,000 it claims still to be owed from the World Cup here in 1995.

Sporting Digest

Basketball

NBA: Charlotte 108 Toronto 85; Atlanta 85 Orlando 77; San Antonio 80 Cleveland 65; Utah 80 Phoenix 73; Milwaukee 98 Houston 93; Washington 89 Portland 87; New York 84 Golden State 79.

Cricket

The International Cricket Council announced yesterday that the total prize-money for the 1999 World Cup, to be held in England, will be \$1m (\$100,000) with the winners receiving around \$200,000.

Cardigan Corbett, the Hampshire test bowler who was forced to miss most of last season with a knee injury, is confident he will be fully fit when he returns for the second round of the English County Championship.

PARAGLIDING TOUR (to Scotland, July): 1st prize \$4,000; 2nd prize \$2,000; 3rd prize \$1,000; 4th prize \$500; 5th prize \$250; 6th prize \$125; 7th prize \$62.50; 8th prize \$31.25; 9th prize \$15.62; 10th prize \$7.81; 11th prize \$3.90; 12th prize \$1.95; 13th prize \$0.97; 14th prize \$0.49; 15th prize \$0.24; 16th prize \$0.12; 17th prize \$0.06; 18th prize \$0.03; 19th prize \$0.01; 20th prize \$0.005.

Football

The midweek Arsenal v Manchester United match was the last of a series of extended contracts with Barclays.

Kevin Keegan, the Fulham manager, has failed with a £250,000 attempt to sign Portsmouth's Swedish international striker Martin Schuster.

TRANSFERS: Kevin Davies (Manchester United to Manchester City); Stuart Pearce (Manchester United to Arsenal); Paul Robinson (Manchester United to Tottenham); Steve Sidwell (Manchester United to Arsenal); Gareth Southgate (Manchester United to Arsenal); Lee Richardson (Manchester United to Arsenal); Lee Collins (Manchester United to Arsenal); Lee Johnson (Manchester United to Arsenal); Lee Hendrie (Manchester United to Arsenal); Lee McCulloch (Manchester United to Arsenal); Lee Peltier (Manchester United to Arsenal); Lee Richardson (Manchester United to Arsenal); Lee Collins (Manchester United to Arsenal); Lee Johnson (Manchester United to Arsenal); Lee Hendrie (Manchester United to Arsenal); Lee McCulloch (Manchester United to Arsenal); Lee Peltier (Manchester United to Arsenal); Lee Richardson (Manchester United to Arsenal); Lee Collins (Manchester United to Arsenal); Lee Johnson (Manchester United to Arsenal); Lee Hendrie (Manchester United to Arsenal); Lee McCulloch (Manchester United to Arsenal); 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Hussain's nous can put England house in order

WHEN success and failure in sport can be measured in 10,000ths of a second, England's 3-1 defeat by the West Indies, on the back of three days' poor cricket, may seem a huge margin. In fact, on the poor pitches much of this series was played on there has been little between the sides. Had Angus Fraser not spilled that vital caught and bowled in the first Trinidad Test, Michael Atherton's successor would not yet be so much as a wrinkle in the eye.

Once a captain goes, particularly in dramatic circumstances, there inevitably follows a frenzy of speculation over who the successor might be. For once the candidates seem obvious, and a straight choice between Nasser Hussain and Alec Stewart is where the wise money lies. Braver speculators, however, may like to consider Adam Hogg, Mark Ramprakash and Nick Knight, the recent A team captain.

For many, not least those who long for a return to starched whites and stubble-free chins, the safest option would be to pick Stewart. At 35, he is no longer young, but his dedication and fitness are such that he could do the job until someone younger feels ready to take over. However, apart from his lack of distinction as captain of Surrey, there is one simple reason why Stewart should not be captain, and it concerns the immediate future of the England team.

Quite simply, if our best young talent are to realise their potential, they must experience

Derek Pringle, Cricket Correspondent, believes Michael Atherton's successor as skipper must be able to lead by example

Test cricket without being over-exposed, especially early on. For that reason Stewart's dotage must be spent keeping wicket and batting at No 3 or No 6, so that the likes of Ben Hollis can be blooded at No 7.

If hierarchies mean anything, then Hussain, Atherton's vice-captain for the last two winters, ought to get the job. A passionate man, Hussain has a shrewd and alert cricketing brain and is good at dealing with the press.

However, as the last remaining vestige of Raymond Illingworth's time as chairman of selectors – it was he who appointed him as Atherton's deputy – he has his critics, and many feel he is moody and selfish. Ironically, these were two of the "accusations" initially levelled at Graham Gooch, now part of the selectorial panel who will appoint the new captain, probably in May. But if Hussain has his faults, the pluses outweigh them, and like Hollis, he captained England A in Pakistan three winters ago, with distinction.

Hollis's resumption as England's one-day captain after his success in Sharjah is bound to link him with the main job. An instinctive captain, he inspires his players more by word than deed. Like Knight, he has yet to prove he is good enough to command a Test place. If England's goal is to

beat the best, you cannot carry players – not even captains.

Talk of Ramprakash is equally fatuous, at least at the moment. As captain of Middlesex, he is learning the ropes in the county game. In the Test arena he has only just found his feet let alone earned his epaulettes, and should not yet be burdened by anything more than scoring runs.

A lack of runs, according to the man himself, was one of the reasons that Atherton decided to resign. But while it is true that his career average has now dipped below 40 – the benchmark of a good Test player – figures had little to do with him quitting a job that consumed him both publicly and privately.

Symmetry is often overlooked in sport, and Atherton's 52-match reign, as England captain – a total only exceeded by Allan Border and Clive Lloyd – was bookended by 3-1 losses to the West Indies. In between, there were also two defeats at the hands of Australia, both 3-1, as well as Pakistan and South Africa.

Worst of all, and what perhaps set him on the slippery slope as far as the media were concerned was the whining and mediocre performances in Zimbabwe, where England lost three one-day matches, after drawing the Test series 0-0. The volume and viciousness of

some of the criticism that ensued, left a bitter taste, which after the hysteria that followed the "soll in the pocket" incident two years earlier, caused him to harden, both inside and out.

Highlights, although fewer, would have included a drawn series against the West Indies and South Africa at home, as well as wins against New Zealand and India. Under him England certainly became more difficult to beat, but only at home.

Overall, one in four Tests were won under his leadership, a figure that revealed a lack of bowling depth and firepower. By his 50th Test in charge, some 50 players had been picked and it was a sure sign of England's weaknesses, that a clear majority of them were bowlers. It was similar sto-

ry this time, with only the 32-year-old Fraser, who took 27 wickets in the series, performing with any distinction, on mostly bowler-friendly pitches.

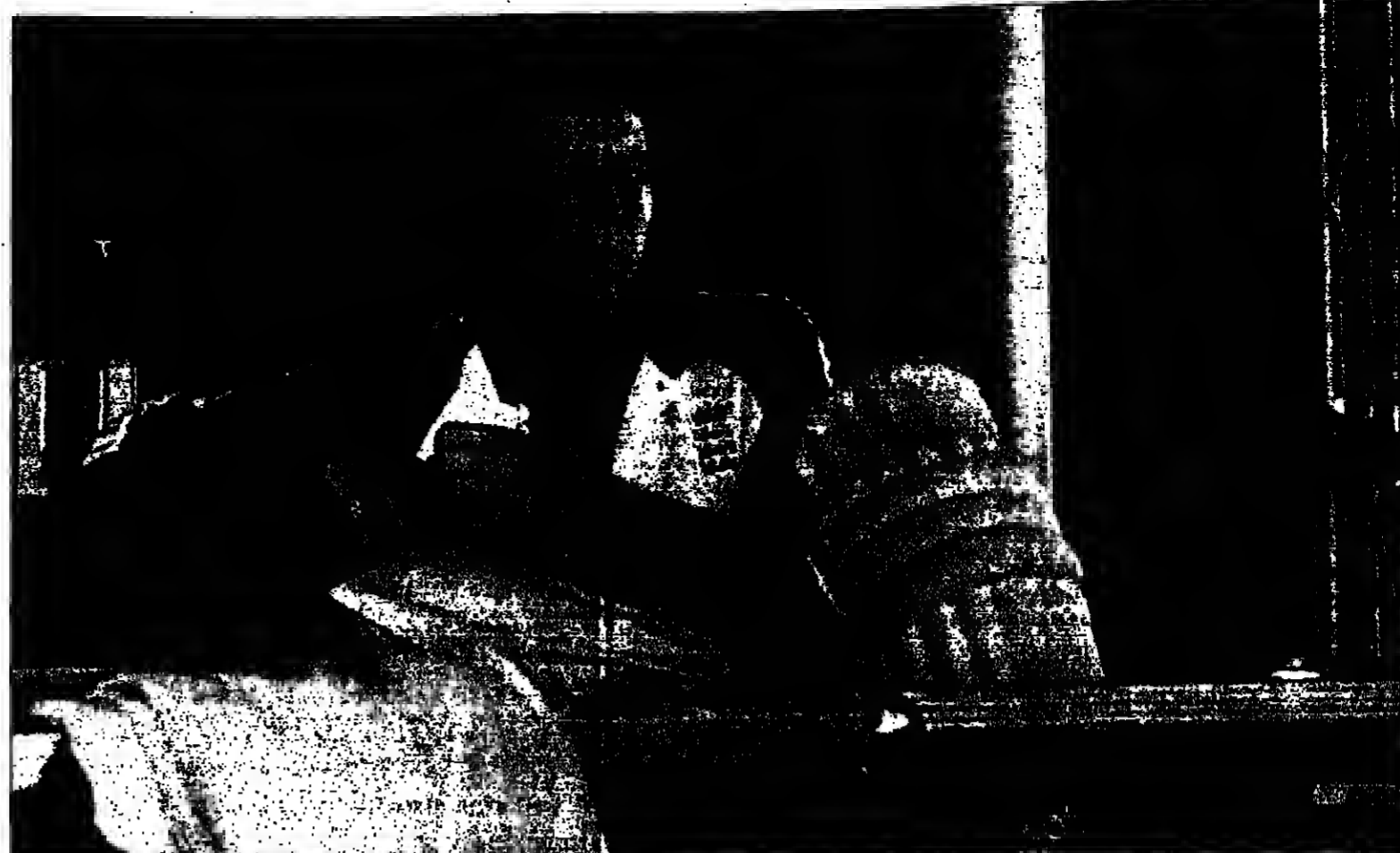
To compound matters, the batsmen, Stewart and Ramprakash apart, peaked too late. Mind you, Atherton's insistence on picking John Crawley ahead of Ramprakash for the Trinidad Tests had all the hallmarks of an own goal, as did the continued selection of a hopelessly out of sorts Jack Russell.

Stubborn, occasionally to the point of inflexibility, he is popular with team-mates. His intransigence is both his strength and his weakness, although a chronically bad back is also taking its toll. The V-sign that slipped out in Barbados was not so much directed at Philo Wal-

lace as against the situation, as England once again squandered a good batting performance by poor bowling. In a way, people should have rejoiced – it showed him to be not the emotional reard many like to suggest he is.

A resolute team man, he was talked out of resigning, not once, but twice. On the first occasion, following last summer's Ashes defeat at Trent Bridge, he had just dotted the T's on his resignation statement when Lord MacLaurin rang on his car phone and talked him round.

It is settled now and although he wants to play on for England and Lancashire, the captaincy defined rather than refined him. Unless his form and the joy he felt after his epic innings in Johannesburg return, life in the ranks may not appeal for long.



Michael Atherton found that the job of leading an often erratic England side consumed him both publicly and privately Photograph: David Johnson

How England's captains compare

Captain	Tests	Wickets	Runs	Centuries	Half-centuries	50s	100s	50s	100s
Michael Atherton	52	10	1,800	1	1	1	1	1	1
Nasser Hussain	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Alec Stewart	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Adam Hogg	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mark Ramprakash	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nick Knight	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

The tough guy approach was not enough for an impossible job

IN HIS long and sometimes clumsy reign as England's captain, Michael Atherton has not often seemed like a matador. In recent weeks he has been pinned to his stumps by curly Ambrose so often that one's money, in a bull-fight, would without doubt have been on the bull.

But in stepping down immediately after this latest so-called-but-so-far defeat in the West Indies he has shown quick feet and acute reflexes. The press, too, was snorting and pawing at the dust, confident that one more lunge could topple him; and the next couple of weeks promised to be a rather special tabloid nightmare. But

in one nimble movement Atherton has leapt away from the sweeping horns, dodging the rising clamour for his replacement and earning himself sweet accolades as a guy who might have failed to light up the skies, but sure as hell gave it his best shot.

In a few years' time, when he looks back on his captaincy and wonders what he could have done differently, he will probably wish that he had somehow found a way to set a more vibrant and optimistic tone. The Atherton years won't really be remembered for their wise-cracks. He chose a different route – the Allan Border route – and tried to act the tough guy.

It didn't work; he was only rarely able to seduce the best out of the very good players under his command. And he ended up with the worst of both worlds: for tough guys, when they lose, simply look ungracious and unsportsmanlike.

Even when he bowed out, he might well have taken a leaf out of Brian Lara's increasingly impressive book. Lara's fulsome tribute to his opposite number made Atherton's own resignation statement seem a bit deflating and below the occasion.

Atherton's supporters will be quick to point out that a captain is only as good as the ammunition at his disposal; if Atherton had

Robert Winder ponders the lessons to be learnt from England's departing captain

been able to wind up Walsh and Ambrose, the story goes, then this last series would have been very different. That might be true: everyone would love to have such good players. But England's much-abused bowlers could easily retort that in eight Test match innings, the West Indies scored 300 only twice. The world's best batsman did not get a century. These figures also pay tribute to Atherton's sometimes mangled

captaincy in the field. And yes, it's a shame that the bowlers didn't do even better. But the series would have been England's if they had batted with more purpose and adventure.

It was a series of fine lines. England twice came close to winning; in Barbados they were outkicked by the weather, and in Antigua they lost a cruel toss. But they have made a habit over the years of always falling just on the wrong side of these fine lines. In Trinidad they simply blew it, and the dropped catch-

es in Antigua were much more decisive than any of the so-called bad decisions that left our batsmen glowering in the dressing-room. Lambert and Hooper should both have been seen off in single figures. Between them they scored 212 runs.

The immediate question is who – Stewart, Hollis, Hussain or Ramprakash – will take charge next summer. But the lesson of Atherton's reign might go deeper than that. It might remain the fantasy of almost every boy cricketer in England (a dwindling band) to captain his country one day; but these days the dream is tinged by the fear that as lovely jobs go, this might

just be one of the worst there is. An England captain finds himself in charge of players who play too much, and pick up injuries almost faster than they gather runs and wickets (the list of England's crooked fast bowlers goes on and on). He finds himself sharing his days with a uniquely judgemental and angry national media who insist on burdening him with their own unrealistic hopes, or lambasting him for the smallest perceived misdemeanour – almost alone among sporting celebrities, a cricket captain gets to pick his nose in super slow motion on prime time television. He finds himself lampooned when Eng-

land lose (which is often) and absurdly ennobled on the rare occasions when they win. One way or another, he finds himself being blamed for unexpected storm clouds in the Caribbean, for brilliant bowling by the opposition, or for a schoolboy run-out involving two of his most trusted lieutenants.

Can it be fun? Atherton insisted yesterday that his time as captain had been "enjoyable", but not everyone will be able to believe him. Certainly he looked demure happy in the field; the decision to step down brought a rare smile to his face. Many England followers would have found this poignant.

Calypso cricket returns to the Caribbean

AFTER two months of extraordinary, enthralling cricket, the bottom line is emphatic enough. The West Indies, who started the series under the cloud of a 3-0 trouncing in Pakistan and the direction of a new, unsettled captain, retained the Wisden Trophy they have held since 1973 by the resounding margin of 3-1.

England, genuinely optimistic that their time had finally come to end the prolonged imbalance, disperse from Antigua today for the five one-day internationals with their dreams so shattered that their longest-serving captain felt compelled to resign with his given assignment incomplete.

In spite of the overall result (and the margin in two Tests of 242 runs and an innings and 52) some of England's senior players, and much of the attendant media, have contended that the result is not a true representation of the difference between the teams. They take into account the pitches, the tosses, the umpiring and the weather

in their assessments. All were vital elements but then they are in any series.

With a little more luck, it seems, and it could have been 5-0 to England – had the umpiring been better in the first of the two Tests in Port of Spain, had Mike Atherton called heads instead of tails in Georgetown and St John's and had it not rained on the last day in Bridgetown.

To take that line is to ignore the primary reason for the outcome – the all-round superiority of the West Indies bowling and the inclination of England's batting to crumble before it when things got tough.

In Curtly Ambrose and Courtney Walsh, the West Indies possessed the most effective pair of fast bowlers in contemporary cricket, each vastly experienced, still physically strong and motivated as much by widespread doubt over their age as by England's pre-series bragadoes.

Brian Lara could throw the ball to them and know they

West Indians have reasons to be cheerful, but it is a mistake for England to be too gloomy. Tony Cozier assesses the series

would exploit any help in the pitches, of which there was plenty, and certainly not waste it, even when conditions favoured batting. Mike Atherton had only the worthy Angus Fraser on whom he could rely for such incisiveness and discipline and the strain eventually took its physical toll on him.

Dean Headley is still a Test newcomer and, judged as such, was far from a failure. But Atherton might have expected more consistency from Andy Caddick, especially in the absence of Darren Gough.

Still, the West Indies were always expected to hold the pace. The surprise was that they were demonstrably stronger in spin as well. Carl Hooper, whose casual off-breaks were for so long a defensive stop-gap between waves of speed, was encouraged to

adopt a more positive method. His fine switch from run-saving middle and leg stumps to outside off, in front of the batsman, and he worked his fingers more than he ever did.

No more was he Geoff Boycott's "lollipop" bowler and his 15 wickets (at 23.66 each) were more than any West Indian spinner had taken in a series since Lance Gibbs 22 years ago.

For two Tests – significantly those won by the West Indies by the widest margins – the new, young leg-spinner, Dinanath Ramnarain, skillfully supported Hooper and gave the West Indies' attack a balance it had lacked for so long.

Conversely, Phil Tufnell, England's hero at The Oval in August, proved their greatest individual disappointment. The initial use of his left-arm spin as

a defensive tactic, into the rough from over the wicket on a turning pitch in the first Port of Spain Test, sent him the wrong message and he was never the attacking bowler who routed the Australians only a few months earlier.

Indeed, Mark Ramprakash, a novice off-spinner, often looked more threatening, making it more perplexing why the specialist of that type, Robert Croft, was not preferred. Apart from anything else, he would have shored up the brittle lower order batting.

Individual batting gains were limited for both teams. Ramprakash's long overdue maturity for England and the West Indies' equally belated discovery, by default, of a forthright opening pair in Philo Wallace and the venerable Clayton Lambert.

Yet England are no nearer to finding a permanent No 3 than the West Indies are a No 6 and both continue to have problems with their wicketkeepers. The psychological impact is likely to be far more far-reaching than

in the development of players for the millennium. The respective selections made it plain that the priority was the present, not the future.

After their undeniable decline over the last few years, culminating in the Pakistani disaster, and under their new captain, Lara, the West Indies could not afford another setback.

For England, this was an opportunity lost to ouliffy a long and dreadful record, not only against the West Indies, but against the major Test countries in general and overseas in particular.

The scenes at the Antigua Recreation Ground on Tuesday evening were instructive. For the West Indies, as the celebratory calypsos blared out from Chiki's Disco and the crowds jumped for joy, it was a throwback to the glory days of the 1980s.

Lara's smile reflected the new, buoyant mood. England's was summed up by Atherton's ashen-faced abdication.

Sussex braced for backlash

SUSSEX were last night expecting a strong reaction from members following the revelation that the county are seeking to leave the County Ground in Hove, their home for 126 years.

The committee, which took over a year ago following a members' revolt, has decided the future of the oldest county club lies away from the historic location and a formal announcement was to be made at the annual general meeting at the Grand Hotel in Brighton.

Sussex claim a new multi-purpose sports stadium is needed in the county. They are already working closely with homeless football club, Brighton and Hove Albion, and the Sussex chairman, Robin Marlar, who has visited four shortlisted sites, hopes to have a replacement for the county's home since 1872 finalised by the end of the year.

"The committee is united in its wish to see us in a new home," Marlar said. "Sport now needs stadia, not a homely little ground surrounded by flats. We

need somewhere where we can accommodate cars. We need thousands of spaces where we currently have only a handful.

"If 4,999 of our 5,000 members say 'no fear' then obviously we will listen to them."

Marlar's problems also extend to sponsorship. With just three weeks to go before the start of the season, a Sussex-based firm in the financial services industry, which was to have backed the club, has been taken over and the new owners are pulling out of the deal.

Warne record as India dominate

India 290-4 v Australia

SHANE WARNE became the most successful spin bowler in Test history yesterday when he snapped up two Indian wickets in the third and final Test in Bangalore.

The Australian leg-spinner reached his landmark as India scored 172 for 3 at tea on the opening day. Warne beat the mark of 309 held by West Indies off-spinner Lance Gibbs when he took the wicket of Rahul Dravid

in his 67th Test. Gibbs had taken 79 Tests to achieve his haul. Warne, who had figures of 0 for 142 in the second Test in Calcutta, which Australia lost by an innings and 219 runs, overhauled Gibbs by dismissing Navjot Sidhu (74) and David (23) in successive overs.

However, his achievement was eclipsed by the batting of Sachin Tendulkar, who hit an unbeaten 117 as India continued their assault on Australia's long-suffering bowlers. The Indians, seeking a clean

sweep after winning the first two Tests, made the Australians toil under the scorching sun to score 290 for 4 by the close.

First day, India won the toss. India - First Innings: V V S Laxman c Taylor b Kapteswari 5, N S Sidhu b Warne 24, R Dravid b Warne 107, S R Tendulkar not out 117, A Ashwin c a Healy b Laxman 40, S C Ganguly not out 6. Extras (bats 62, bow 19). Total for 4, 290 overs. Fall: 1-64 2-128 3-182 4-248. To Bat: M R Murghe, A Kurban, Harinder Singh, Harbhajan Singh, S L V Raju. Bowling: Kapteswari 21-4-0-11, Laxman 24-4-0-2, Warne 27-4-0-2, Stewart 9-0-0-2, Robertson 4-0-0-4, Vishnu 4-0-0-4, Laxman 1-0-0-1. AUSTRIA: M A Birtle, M J Smees, G S Stewart, M E Waugh, R T Ponting, D S Latham, R A Healy, G K Thomas, G R Robertson, M D Jones, A G Dale. Completed: V K Prasanna and D R Shepherd.

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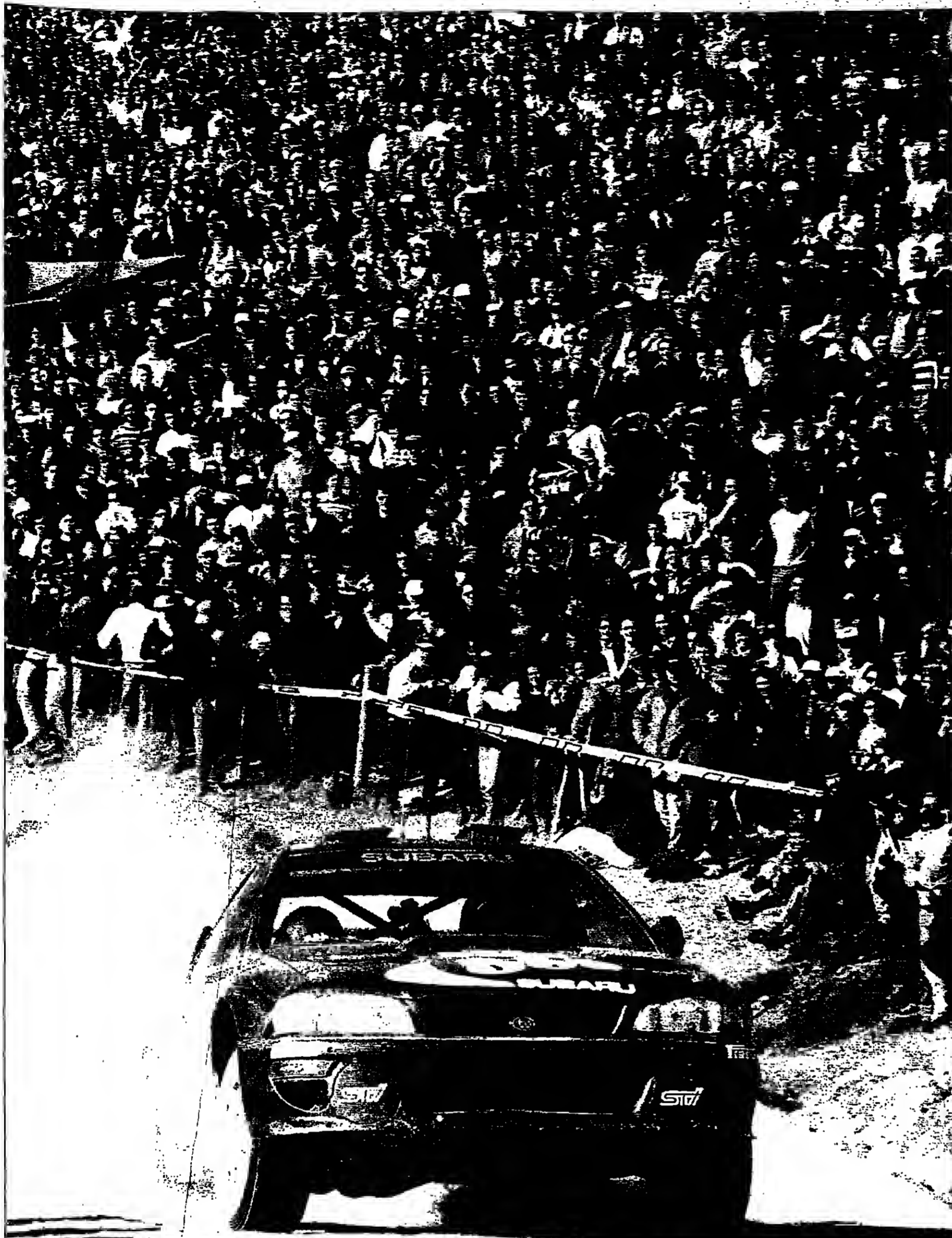
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Leading man: Britain's Colin McRae races past a hilltop crowd near Fafe yesterday, during the 24th stage of the Portuguese Rally which he went on to win

Photograph: AP

Robson ready for Gazza 'grief'

Football

THE Middlesbrough manager, Bryan Robson, joked yesterday that he is expecting "some grief" from his new £3.45m signing Paul Gascoigne.

But he added that although Gascoigne would be the centre of media attention he would still be worth every penny of his transfer fee. "There will be certain people looking for knocking stories. But these incidents are few and far between these days," Robson said. "I am sure Gazza will give me a little bit of grief from time to time but it will be worth it."

"It is the media who expect trouble, not me. I believe Gascoigne will respect me as a manager and I will respect him as a player."

And Robson believes that Gascoigne has now matured and will be looking to the mid-fielder to inspire his younger players. Robson said: "When a player reaches the age of 30, he becomes aware of the fact that he is in the second part of his career. He wants to work hard to make sure that he plays on as long as possible. Gazza loves his football and our fans will love him."

"Paul likes a few pints now and again, but he is one of the hardest trainers I have ever worked with. The other players will see how hard he works and it will be a big influence."

Gascoigne will be named in Middlesbrough's squad for the Coca-Cola Cup final against Chelsea at Wembley on Sunday if he passes his medical. If the medical tests are positive, Boro plan to unveil Gascoigne at a news conference today.

Supporters gathered outside Middlesbrough's training ground in the picturesque village of Hurworth to catch a glimpse of Britain's most famous footballer - but, like the press, they were banned from watching him train and banned from talking to him.

They were also quite comfortably outnumbered by the crows in the wood outside the main entrance.

Gazzmania? Well, not quite. One flat-capped pensioner did turn up with his bulldog on a lead, swearing he had changed his name to Gazza after hearing the news that Gascoigne had joined Middlesbrough from Rangers.

While Gazza may have lost some of his pace on the pitch these days, he showed a pretty fair turn of speed as he arrived for his first training session with his new team-mates. At 10.15 his Range-Rover sent 30 or so photographers scattering as it roared

through the main entrance of the training ground, with Gascoigne himself at the wheel and his minder, Jimmy "Five Bellies" Gardiner, sprawled across the passenger seat. There was neither a wave, nor a hint of smile. Maybe at 30 this is a new mature Gazza after all.

The mood among the fans was upbeat. The hope for them is that he contributes as much to the team as Juninho - the little Brazilian whose brilliant performances graced the Riverside Stadium last season.

Among today's sprinkling of fans was the Middlesbrough Supporters' Association secretary, Simon Bolton, though it should be said he was ferried the 15 miles from Middlesbrough to Hurworth in a taxi supplied by Sky television, after they became desperate for someone to talk to. Bolton, the man who looks uncannily like "Five Bellies", had been woken up this morning by Rangers fans, sad at the loss of Gascoigne.

"I can understand them being a bit upset. Gazza is a hero to them," Bolton said. "He is one of the best-known names in football. It was a big surprise when they heard he'd joined, but as long as he puts in 100 per cent like Juninho, he will have the fans' respect. But they won't put up with anyone free-loading here."

Gascoigne could make an immediate return to the end of next month in a testimonial for the veteran Rangers midfielder Ian Durrant.

At the moment the biggest selling point of the testimonial, which will be against Sheffield Wednesday on 28 April, is the return of the former Celtic forward Paolo Di Canio to Glasgow.

However, Gascoigne yesterday indicated he might offer to turn out in the match, as he regrets having left Rangers without having had the chance to bid farewell to his colleagues and the club's fans.

He told Virgin Radio: "Leaving Rangers was one of the saddest days in my career, but now I'm looking forward to my new challenge. I have the chance to work with Brian Robson, who was my idol when I was a boy."

"Yet I'm sad to be leaving Rangers especially, as I never had the chance to say goodbye to the guys. But hopefully I can, as Ian Durrant has a testimonial coming up and I would like to say goodbye to the fans properly."

The main stumbling block could be Middlesbrough's promotion ambitions, with the match coming the week before their final League game of the season against Oxford.

Bohinen completes £1.45m Derby move

DERBY COUNTY have completed the signing of Lars Bohinen from Blackburn for £1.45m. The Norwegian international midfielder signed a three-year deal after meeting the Rams manager, Jim Smith, at Pride Park.

Bohinen failed to win a regular place at Blackburn, but Smith believes he will be ideally suited to Derby's style of play.

"We've still got nearly a quarter of our season to go, and Lars could play a substantial part in us getting into Europe," Smith said. "Lars is a quality player who scores goals and he will be given a free role in a very offensive midfield position. I'm looking forward to working with him."

Bohinen's short-term aim is to earn a place in Norway's World Cup squad, but he insisted: "I haven't just come here for that. Of course, I'll do all I can to get back in the Norway team, but I'm excited about coming to Derby County."

Bobby Robson, the former England manager, is consider-

ing a move back to the Netherlands to take charge of PSV Eindhoven for the second time in his career. PSV, where Robson was manager from 1990 to 1992, guiding them to the league title twice, have offered Robson a deal reported to be worth up to £15,000 a week.

The Dutch club are looking to fill the coaching vacancy left by the departure of Dick Advocaat, who is to take charge at Rangers next season.

A PSV spokesman confirmed that an offer had been made to Robson, who is currently director of football at Barcelona, following talks with the Dutch club's chairman, Harry van Raaij, in Spain.

However, the Dutch media believe Robson may be seen as a temporary solution and therefore only offered a one-year contract as the main PSV are said to really want - the former player and current Bruges coach Eric Gerets - will not be released from his existing contract until 1999.

First win for McRae

Rallying

IN THE end it came down to just over two seconds, but it was enough for Britain's Colin McRae to record his first victory of the season in the Portuguese Rally yesterday.

In a formidable display of aggressive driving, the 29-year-old Scot powered his Subaru Impreza into the lead on Monday's third stage and never relinquished command of the race to claim his 14th career win.

However, the driver who made McRae sweat was the Spaniard Carlos Sainz, whose late

charge for victory in his Toyota Corolla failed by just 2.1sec.

Sainz, who started the final day 27 seconds off the lead, nearly overtook McRae with the fastest times in five of the last leg's eight stages.

McRae, who took third place in Monte Carlo but failed to finish in the following two events of the season, was determined to win in Portugal to avoid slipping further back in the overall drivers' standings. He is now fourth in the world championship with 14 points.

Sainz has moved clear at top with 22 points and has lifted Toyota to 36 points, one more

than Mitsubishi, in the manufacturers' championship.

Finland's Juhani Kankkunen, the joint championship leader with Sainz before Portugal, finished out of the points in seventh place to remain on 16 points. Belgium's Freddy Loix finished third, 45.8 seconds off the pace, in his Toyota Corolla, while Britain's Richard Burns in a Mitsubishi Carisma finished fourth, 53.1sec behind.

Finland's Tomi Makinen, the reigning world champion and last year's winner in Portugal, spun off the road and into a tree on Tuesday.

Positions, Digest, page 28

Atherton quit over batting

Cricket

MIKE ATHERTON's chronic lack of batting form was the main reason behind his decision to resign as England captain.

The England coach, David Lloyd, yesterday revealed why Atherton quit after losing the final Test, and with it the series 3-1. "Over a fairly lengthy period now he has been short of runs, and he'd taken enough," he said.

Lloyd believes it would be "right and proper" for Atherton to be consulted on his successor. Alec Stewart is the favourite, ahead of Nasser Hussain, Adam Hoggie and Mark Ramprakash. "I expect I will also be asked for an opinion, and if I am I will give it," added Lloyd.

Lloyd was too upset on Tuesday night to speak about either the Test defeat or Atherton's resignation. He said yesterday: "There were so many different

emotions. When Hussain and Thorpe were together we were in control. But then there was one moment of madness with the run-out and suddenly one wicket brought seven. As for Mike, when he was in charge and we were bowling sides out he was as good a captain as anyone. But he never had bowlers at either end with more than 300 Test wickets to their name and that has got to be a big factor in his record."

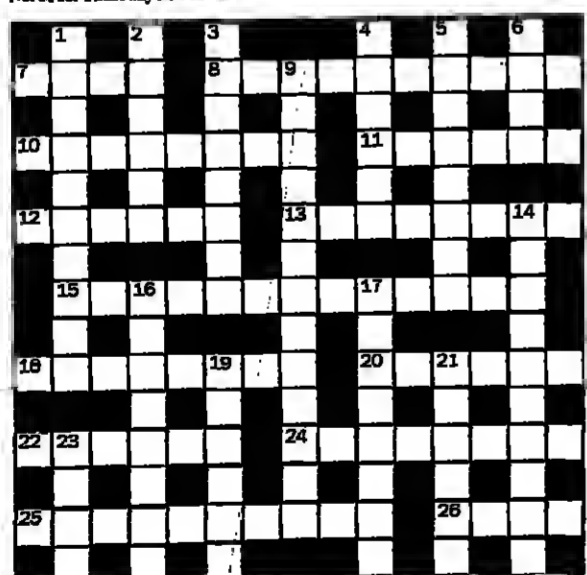
Derek Pringle, page 30

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3568, Thursday 26 March

By Phil

Wednesday's solution



- ACROSS**
- 7 Foodstuff's a source of iron? Thanks (4)
 - 8 See one take on first instrument of torture (4, 6)
 - 10 Distracted, Paul came to make an apology (3, 5)
 - 11 Queen beginning to rule, say, in Australia (6)
 - 12 Collection of antiquities to make you think and sound hesitant (6)
 - 13 Oh! Crop's lying around farmer's first meadow (8)
 - 15 After tucking into beer, writing a statement of faith (8, 5)
 - 18 Confirmed bachelor's not quite intent pronunciation (8)
 - 20 Left has irritation with Government's first mishap (6)
 - 22 Understand trick (4, 2)
 - 24 A pause during specially-arranged travel (8)
 - 25 Outspoken and favouring mostly the Conservatives? (10)
 - 26 Great many killed (4)
- DOWN**
- 1 Give more freedom to rendering of Elgar etude (10)
 - 2 Inept, getting left on the other side of the Chunnel (6)
 - 3 I'd turned up scheme to secure graduate ambassador material? (8)
 - 4 Sycophantic troops following Sergeant Major (6)
 - 5 Call to have team close to the action (8)
 - 6 Jack Sprat's favourite bank? (4)
 - 9 Working with lace, say, having little financial backing (2, 1, 10)
 - 14 Married couple, say, going over the Spanish part of church (4, 6)
 - 16 Variety of top-rate English musical entertainment (8)
 - 17 Think it should be found in county's spectators (8)
 - 19 I almost blush about new bypass (6)
 - 21 Doctor ruins hospital - lots of patients all at once? (6)
 - 23 Doctor brought in a second man (4)